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THE STATE OF THE ARTS
BEYOND

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Editors: Chandra Chari Uma Iyengar	Editorial Advisory Board: K.R. Narayanan S. Gopal Raja Ramanna N.S. Jagannathan Narayani Gupta Romila Thapar Meenakshi Mukherjee K.N. Raj V.P. Dutt Mrinal Pande Tejeshwar Singh Chitra Narayanan Ashok Vajpeyi Pulin Nayak	

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Post Box No. 5247, Chanakyapuri
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Registered mail should be sent only to
23 Vasant Enclave, New Delhi 110057
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Nikhil Chakravartty—A Tribute

We, Chandra Chari, Uma Iyengar and Chitra Narayanan, Trustees of The Book Review Literary Trust, wish to record our deep sense of loss at the demise of Nikhil Chakravartty, a doyen of Indian journalism. For *The Book Review*, his generosity of spirit has meant its continued existence over twenty-two years. But for his spontaneous decision to take over and run the journal from 1978 to 1989, *The Book Review* may have well faced extinction within two years of being born. It is a matter of great pride for us that Nikhil Chakravartty's contribution to *The Book Review* was included in his B.D. Goenka Award citation.

Nikhil Chakravartty was a mentor and guide and his fearless journalism has been a role model for us in the running of *The Book Review*. His going creates a permanent void on our Advisory Board. We pay our homage to the exemplary human being that he was.

Chandra Chari

Uma Iyengar

Chitra Narayanan

It was in 1963 that I met Nikhil Chakravartty for the first time. I had just taken over as Director of the China Division in the Ministry of External Affairs. He came to see me in his capacity as a journalist, as someone who knew China and was deeply interested in Sino-Indian relations. From this very first encounter I was attracted by his unassuming ways, his vast knowledge of things, his insights into people and politics, his keen intellect and power of analysis, the quiet sense of humour that enlivened his conversation and the deep humanity that broke out through his Socialist argumentations. Very soon we became friends and our families became friends.

In 1975 when Chandra Chari, Uma Iyengar and my daughter Chitra ventured on starting *The Book Review* Nikhilda was one of the enthusiastic supporters of the project. Later when *The Book Review* was facing a crisis of publication it was he who took it over and published it from his Perspective Publications and kept it going for ten long years. When the three founding women editors were able to take over the publication, Nikhilda returned it to them and with a financial contribution. Nikhilda was in a real sense the foster parent of *The Book Review*.

I recall vividly Nikhil's visit to Beijing when I was at the Embassy there and his stay with us in 1978. He was visiting Beijing after many years. It was interesting to see how he traced out some of his old friends in Beijing and how warmly they received him and entertained him. He had so many memories and stories to tell of the old golden days of India-China friendship under Jawaharlal Nehru and Zhou Enlai. We went together to the famous Dazhai commune, and of course, the splendid monuments of Beijing. His observations of China of the time were acute and educative. As a guest he was the most and the most delightful to look after.

On return to India we picked up the old threads of friendship with the Chakravartty family. By this time I was a non-official—Vice Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. I discovered that as a non-official it was easier to deal with Nikhilda. He was indeed a born non-official. We came closer to each other during this period. I discovered how fond he was, though very undemonstratively, of his son Sumit and his grandson whom he called Mithi. His wife, Renu, was for him a life-companion, for she had been a colleague and a comrade as well, an active and equal participant in several initiatives, political and social. Her passing away was a blow to him; he did not show his grief and did not permit it to impede his work and mission in life. But I think he was not quite the same after the death of Renu.

When I became the Vice President he still used to visit us very frequently. But he was never at ease with officialdom and meticulously avoided attending all official parties, unless it had some connection with his profession—journalism. I invited him several times to join on my foreign visits, but he was not interested. When I was making an official visit to Iran in 1996 I told him that I would like to take Sumit with the group of journalists accompanying me. To my surprise he replied "Why not his father?". This was the first time Nikhil had suggested anything for himself. He came with me along with Katyal of *The Hindu*, Saeed Naqvi and Zahid Ali Khan. It was a most rewarding experience for me to be with him on an official trip. We went to Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz. Nikhil's observations of Iran were most enlightening, he sensed with an uncommonly instinct the change that was in the making in Iranian society.

A conversation with Nikhilda was liberal education—sometimes it was a revolutionary education. New facets of issues used to show up. And his recollections of Indian personalities, leaders and events were amazingly rich, throwing new light on personalities and on the history of the nationalist movement and the post-independence period. I used to ask Nikhil why he did not record his conversations because they were things he would not jot down on paper. Now they are lost irretrievably.

Everyone knew that Nikhil Chakravartty was a Socialist. But he was a democrat among socialists and a socialist among democrats. For him democracy and socialism were inseparable. He strove through his chosen medium of journalism to keep the nation attuned to the national imperative of social justice and the international

imperative of equality among nations. He spoke as he thought, simply; he wrote as he spoke, clearly; but both were thought-provoking and scintillating. Not for Nikhilda is the glib phrase, the shallow one-liner, the hidden jibe. Not for him the praise of authority or the medallion of public favour. Nikhil Chakravartty believed that journalism was a calling, not just a profession, much less a lucrative business.

The fact that his weekly the *Mainstream* has not only survived through the years, but flourished as a journal, spreading his ideas and outlook on politics and social affairs, not in any exclusive manner but in the welter of different ideas and opinions that found place in its pages, is a testimony and a tribute to his purposiveness in the midst of his myriad-minded interests and concerns. Among the many contributions he has bequeathed to us the *Mainstream* is unique. That he has left it in the young and able hands of Sumit Chakravartty is a matter of pride and solace to all his friends who cherish unforgettable memories of this lovable and humane personality, this unpretentious intellectual, this unassuming crusader for progressive causes, and this gentle giant of journalism of the twentieth century.

K.R. Narayanan President of India

On the passing of Nikhil Chakravartty I mourn the loss of not only a first rate journalist but an old family friend. We had known him since the mid-thirties when he was an undergraduate in the Presidency College in Calcutta, and he had been a personal friend since 1961, when he saw me to express his approval of the Indian stand of the historical position in the border dispute with China. Recognizing that I was, in his own words, "not one of us", yet his friendship surmounted party loyalty. In *Mainstream*, which he founded and built up into one of the leading journals of Delhi as an outspoken voice of "progressive nationalism", he published whatever I wrote, serious or trivial, and I could rely on him for his partisanship. In the penultimate years before the transfer of power, he had been a reasoned spokesman for the right course; and in the fifty years of Independence, he had represented all thoughtful Indians who loved freedom and were prepared to do all they could to defend and safeguard it. His was a voice of sanity and common sense amid the increasing turmoil.

Nikhil was a familiar figure in Delhi, moving freely among high and low, and he will be sorely missed. His unflinching loyalty to the right persons, his unswerving commitment to noble ends and his unfailing comment drawing our attention to what is correct in our country and abroad are rare talents which he has passed onto his son, who shares his ideas and ideals. Some years before his death, he transferred to him the editorship of his journal. So we look forward to the continuance of the Nikhil tradition.

S. Gopal

It is only with time that the magnitude of the void created by Nikhil Chakravartty's passing becomes clear to some of us. Initially, we took the news with resignation; sorrow was tempered by the realization that he was terminally ill and it was a matter of time. Gradually, however, the implications of the loss to India's fractured media of perhaps its most commanding moral presence begins to gnaw. Whose sober counsel, whose voice of wisdom stemming from a non-negotiable commitment to values would now prevail?

Nikhil Chakravartty, to most of us Nikhilda, a form of reference and direct address in Bengali which signifies an elder brother, commanded respect not by his intimidating presence. He was laid back and avuncular. He had a sharp and dry sense of humour and a mischievous twinkle in his eyes invariably preceded its expression. He never raised his voice or thrust himself centre-stage. It was his impeccable personal conduct and the commitment to truth and values that characterized his journalism, which gave him his stature. It was this commitment which prompted him to close down the *Mainstream*, the weekly he founded and painstakingly turned into a respected organ of discourse, during the dark period of the Emergency (1975-77) when he could not publish what he wanted to.

Nikhilda's visceral morality was shaped partly by the Brahmo Samaj, to which his family belonged and which was known for its emphasis on a life of high rectitude and an almost puritanical austerity, and Marxism, a philosophy of elemental outrage against the inequities of unbridled 19th century capitalism. He came under the spell of Marxism, whose morality is rooted in its concern for social justice, during his days in Oxford which, along with that other great British University, Cambridge was a nursery of young communists in the 1930s. Returning to India, he shunned the arm chair and plunged into militant activity, going underground when the Communist Party of India was banned following its switch to an insurrectionary line after its Second Congress in Calcutta in February-March, 1948.

It was not just Nikhilda who was active in the CPI. His wife, Renu Chakravarty, a niece of Dr. B.C. Roy, West Bengal's highly respected patrician Chief Minister, was a member of the Lok Sabha, for several terms, and an articulate and skilled parliamentarian. Nikhilda, however, was never shackled by his ideology and party and strongly criticized the latter whenever he thought it necessary. He was deeply troubled by the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Sino-Indian border clashes in 1962, and the acrimonious splitting of the undivided Communist Party of India in 1964 with the CPI(M) emerging as a new party. Equally painful to him was the disclosure of Joseph Stalin's monstrous crimes by Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, the Sino-Soviet schism, the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's lurch toward a market economy.

Yet Nikhil-da's was never a case of *The God That Failed*; he was too much of a rationalist to have any god—neither Marx nor any other. As he slowly drifted away from the party, he evolved his *weltanschauung* in which Marxism was tempered by humanism and pluralism and a commitment to libertarian values. The *Mainstream*, which he resurrected after the Emergency, and turned into a highly respected journal of discourse, reflected this in its content which was marked by a remarkable diversity of ideological positions and wide-ranging polemic of a high quality. It also mirrored his deep concern over the decline in the level of political discourse in India and the growing trivialization and criminalization of politics under the influence of consumer culture and the market economy. Yet he did not give up hope; nor did he become cynical and embittered but waged a relentless war, not only through *Mainstream* but the incisive and highly respected syndicated political column he wrote.

It is hardly surprising, journalism which he took up after teaching college for a spell on his return from Oxford, became his principal avocation. And he became the natural leader of his profession. He was active for years in the Editors' Guild of India whose president he was at one time. An unfailing champion of the freedom of the Press, he actively defended it both in the Press Council of India, of which he was a member, and in movements launched by journalists, displaying even when he had crossed eighty, a reserve of energy which shamed many decades younger.

His last assignment was as Chairman of Prasar Bharati, the autonomous Corporation that the Gujral government had created by an Ordinance to supervise the functioning of Doordarshan All-India Radio which too had been liberated from government control. It was not an easy task and involved dealing with not only the ethos of a new broadcasting and telecasting culture, but multitudinous administrative issues. He brought to it the same application and sense of fairplay which he displayed in all the diverse functions he had discharged in his life.

With his passing, *Prasar Bharati* has lost its gentle and wise guiding hand and Indian journalism its tallest protagonist. It is a tragedy that this should happen when the media has been thrown into a deep crisis by the advent of the consumer culture and the market economy.

Hiranmay Karlekar

Some two years before his death, Nikhilda made one last trip to the Uttarakhand hills that he loved to visit. He told me happily how he enjoyed riding the new train to Kathgodam, and then hiring a taxi and driving up to Munsyari. 'But when did you plant it?' I asked aghast, knowing fully well at the various risks involved in travelling unescorted and without obtaining the necessary reservations along the route. 'Oh I just risked it', he said with a twinkle, 'that was the really enjoyable part'.

The more one saw and read of Nikhilda and his writings, the more convinced one became that his relentless nomadism lay at the heart of his very humane and very informative journalism. The most convincing analysts of the culturally and politically complex nature of the real India, have been men and women who, for one reason or another, were great travellers: Buddha, Mahavira, Baanbhatt, the poet, and nearer our time, Gandhi.

Charaiveti, Charaiveti—move! move! said the Vedas. 'Roam the earth fearless as a rhino,' Buddha advised his disciples. It is such wanderings that re-establish the

harmony between man and nature, between a journalist and his stories; between an elder journalist and a younger one.

At 84, Nikhilda was a national institution, but an institution of a very unpredictable sort. Sometimes when he was consulted as an oracle, his replies disappointed and bewildered the askers; because he, as a rational man, disliked any aura of mysticism around either political events or his own persona as a journalist. He had witnessed and participated in great events in our history, and he alone could also tell you with mischievous twinkle in his eyes, that the now famous 'each time a big tree falls, the earth shakes' image of Rajiv's was actually derived from one of his Nana's speeches delivered at the death of C. Rajagopalachari, and that a certain senior CPI(M) leader had taken forty years to overcome his shyness and propose to his lady love.

Without attempting to enter and operate in their world as an insider, he sympathized with all out-groups, including the OBCs, and stood up for their political and human rights. But he saw through the naïveté of exaggerating the importance of caste struggle at the expense of national unity. He believed firmly that social justice best obtained in a nation that has a stable polity, and a sound system of justice.

What made Nikhil Da an invaluable presence for the likes of us eventually, were not only his writings. His life is a masterpiece for all aspiring journalists. He lived out his fears and hopes of a truly liberal and honest intellectual in India of the late 20th century and proved that man alone will outlive the threat of his extinction. His restlessness brought him out of the confines of his early academic life, and thereafter he refused the final luxury of a religious or political creed. In this he stands unique and alone.

Mrinal Pan

My acquaintance with Nikhil Chakravarty began in the mid-sixties when I was working with the *Hindustan Times*, *Mainstream* had just been launched and my Left friends had introduced me to the journal and, a little later, to Nikhil himself. He had not yet become the father figure he had since, and even though I was much younger than him, pride would not let me address him as 'Nikhilda' as others had even then started to do. He was still a distant figure to me, though friends in *Patriot*, just born and at combative best, constantly spoke of him. It was only when the Emergency was imposed in 1975 and the Indian Press was under siege that I came to know him better. This began an association which I have counted as one of the best things to have happened to me. On my part it was part awe and part slowly maturing affection. On his part he gave generously of his enormous reserves of friendship—to which anyone who knew him more than slightly will readily testify.

In these twenty-five years, we have met countless number of times, and on many occasions, worked together. The years he was President of the Editors Guild were the most active of that rather lackadaisical body. Under his guidance the Guild accomplished a great deal more than rhetoric about the 'Freedom of the Press'. On behalf of the Guild, we travelled together more than once to the then turbulent Punjab.

On his return from Oxford in the early forties and after a couple of false starts including a stint in academia, Nikhil chose the one profession that was tailor made for him. He had few peers in journalism, especially commentative journalism. His commitment to the freedom of the press was total and his norms of professional ethics were of the strictest. People who have only read him would not know that what appeared in print was only a minuscule fraction of what he knew. His knowledge of affairs, especially Indian politics and its dynamics, was astonishing. There was no one of any consequence in the Indian public life he did not know and who did not readily, even eagerly, share confidences with him. Leaders of all political parties spoke to him freely with the total trust that he would not betray their dark secrets. He did not eke out columns out with these whispered confidences as others, anxious to show off their rubbing shoulders with the high and mighty, often did.

His intellectual range was astonishing, though he wore his learning lightly. This and his knowledge of affairs he shared with me much to my enrichment. He had a certain dry ironic wit that he held under check in his public writing but his conversation with friends sparkled with this sardonic humour.

Nikhil was a life long Leftist in politics but an undecieved one. Often his writings irked official Communists but none dared question his intellectual honesty, public purpose and commitment to India that shone through everything he did or wrote. Almost alone among commentators on public affairs he once pleaded for a national government, seeing in it the only solution to the immobilism and confusion caused by a fragmented political electoral verdict.

Books were a special interest of Nikhil and his contribution to the growth and stabilization of *The Book Review* will be gratefully acknowledged by all those associated with it. His loss is a deeply personally one to me and to everyone who knew him.

N.S. Jagannathan

Drawing Up A Balance Sheet

Neera Chandhoke

AGES OF FREEDOM: FIFTY YEARS OF THE INDIAN NATION STATE

Edited by Partha Chatterjee

Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 327, Rs. 545.00

CONTEMPORARY INDIA: G.R. BHATKAL MEMORIAL LECTURES 1975-1995

Compiled and edited by Sadanand Bhatkal

Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1998, pp. 246, Rs. 300.00

Every polity has to—at historically significant moments—take stock of as well as assess its past and present experience, in order to decide which direction it wants to go in. As we stand, poised to enter fifty years of India's independent history, such a moment seems to have arisen in our polity today. For whereas more than half a century of experimentation with democracy has consolidated gains, it has as well thrown up intractable problems. Some of the contributions in the two edited books concentrate on the problems, none concentrate only on the gains, and some concentrate on both. Therefore, some of the authors are excessively critical, some are balanced, though none is laudatory. This arouses some melancholy, for India set to forge her post-independence destiny with a great deal of hope and tremendous enthusiasm. As Rajni Khatri in the first volume under review puts it, India under the leadership of Nehru sought to build a pluralist democracy—"bearing nothing but the future in mind and leaving the debris of the past behind, and engaging in the dream of building a new India through economic development and social change undertaken by the instrumentality of the new state, reducing in the process the pains of extreme poverty and of being one of the most unequal societies in the world" (p. 25).

In part, this aspiration stemmed from the commitment of the freedom movement to democracy; in part, it stemmed from—as Kothari argues—the major global changes that marked the world in 1947. Several momentous features described the world in the post-Second World War phase. The triumph of liberal democracy over fascism, the rejection of western Europe through the Marshall plan, the growth of left-wing parties in the West, the fulfill-

... whereas more than half a century of experimentation with democracy has consolidated gains, it has as well thrown up intractable problems. Some of the contributions in the two edited books concentrate on the problems, none concentrate only on the gains, and some concentrate on both. Therefore, some of the authors are excessively critical, some are balanced, though none is laudatory. This arouses some melancholy, for India set to forge her post-independence destiny with a great deal of hope and tremendous enthusiasm.

ment of the Keynesian model in the form of the welfare state, the goal of full employment, the expansion of communism and in particular the emergence of China, large-scale decolonization, the setting up of the U.N. and other agencies committed to welfare and social well being, and above all the consolidation of democracy and development marked this period off from either the preceding or the succeeding period. All this required active intervention of the state in taking the country forward through a process of modernization, social uplift, and secularism.

A felicitous political conjuncture indeed. But what do we have to show for all this in the fifty years that India has been independent of colonial rule? We

would do well to look at the answer one Sabitri Debi of Kotulpur in Bankura gave to a series of questions on the freedom struggle raised by Partha Chatterjee and his colleagues:

When the country became free, it would bring good to its people. We were in servitude. They were ruling us, oppressing us. We would be free from that oppression. We would become independent. An independent country would be much better. May be people would get coarse [basic] food and clothing. And the traders—weavers and peasants would each do their own work and feed themselves. We would have some ease, some comfort. . . That is why when freedom came in the year 1947, we were so full of hope and expectation. We thought we would live in happiness, that our children would live in comfort. We did not want great comforts: so we didn't want to become landlords, we didn't want a lot of wealth or gold or silver. All we wanted was enough *coarse rice* and *coarse cloth* to live in comfort. But we never got those satisfactions of freedom. . . We freed ourselves from the hands of foreigners. *But now we can't free ourselves from our own brothers in our own country*" (p. 2-3, emphasis mine).

If we can assess political biographies of societies from personal biographies, this passage is a damning indictment of the Indian State. All that the people wanted was coarse cloth and coarse grains, but even this has not been granted to them. What price freedom? Good intentions? Commitments? Prabhat Patnaik writes that the main problem is that capitalist development was sought to be promoted without any significant land reforms. "The bourgeoisie of this century, coming late into the historical arena, has shown itself to be singularly incapable of launching a thorough-going attack on pre-capitalist property relation lest it rebound into an attack on bourgeois property relations" (p. 39-40). This lack led to three major consequences. Firstly, it provided a narrow base to capitalist development into the countryside. Secondly, it failed, on the one hand, to break the power of the landlords and to enlist the social support of the rural masses on the other. Thirdly, it provided a damper to the overall rate of growth of output and employment in the country.

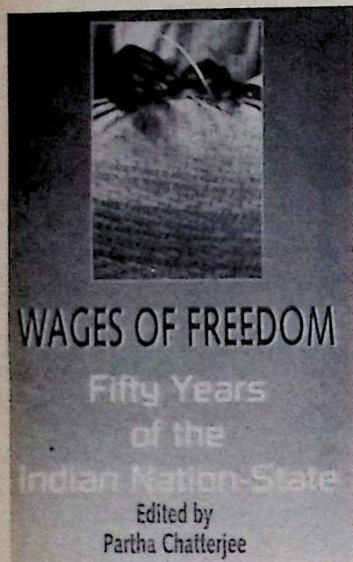
Patnaik's essay comments on opportunities lost by the narrow vision of the leadership. Not only did the development strategy preclude an egalitarian distribution of assets including land; it provided an opportunity for the

All that the people wanted was coarse cloth and coarse grains, but even this has not been granted to them. What price freedom? Good intentions? Commitments? Prabhat Patnaik writes that the main problem is that capitalist development was sought to be promoted without any significant land reforms.

proto-bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, and the landlords, to use the state in order to augment their share in the output. This amounts to what Patnaik calls the primary accumulation of capital. The state apart from its other tasks became the medium for the large-scale transfers of capital to the capitalist and proto-capitalist groups at the same time as it was called upon to maintain growing expenditures to keep the domestic market expanding. The statist regime ended in the 1980s for a variety of internal and external reasons, truncating in the process India's economic autonomy radically. Whereas we cannot return to the *dirigisme* strategy today, we have to chart out imaginative measures to come to terms with the international economy, and yet retain internal autonomy. This will involve radical land distribution, free and compulsory primary education, the provision of basic health care, the provision of basic amenities in rural areas, decentralization of decision making and a step up in the investment ratio—"to ensure that the economy is spared the ravages of speculation whose scope has expanded so greatly under the current internationalization of capital" (p. 60).

But all this needs is the kind of political will which our past and current leadership has failed to provide. Why cannot a country that prides itself on its technological capacity to go nuclear provide either education or health to its people? This may be an obvious statement, but it is not by this fact rendered trivial. For at some point someone has to ask the question—why? We exploded a nuclear device at Pokhran at roughly the same time as our farmers were committing suicide because they could not bear the weight of debts!

Chatterjee in a historical exploration of the problem argues that the modernizing impulses of the leadership sat uneasily with the demands of democracy. From the very beginning of the independent career of the Indian nation-state, we find a contradiction between its modernizing aspirations and its commitment to democracy. The con-



tradition was to mature in the 1970s when under Indira Gandhi a centralized state structure was set up even as political society dispersed and was fragmented. These contradictions have sharpened to a point "where one can hear more clearly than was ever possible in Indian politics after Independence, the posing of a choice between the demands of modernity and the compulsions of democracy" (p. 17).

Since Chatterjee poses the problem in terms of a dichotomy, and in terms of a polarization, he cannot tell us how the civil and the political arenas have themselves undergone change, how the governing principles of these arenas have shifted from the task of arbitrating conflicting demands, to the task of arbitrating incommensurable demands. Kothari, however, touches upon this point and argues that the upsurge of the so-called lower castes and classes has mounted a challenge to existing structures and hegemonies. "The political process set into train by this new awakening will, of course, be subjected to a backlash from those who have enjoyed power and privilege for close to half a century. Also, the new bearers of power will not necessarily pursue the interests of the large masses in whose name they are likely to assume power. ... for the masses there is still a long road ahead" (p. 36). Of all the things that India has inherited and imbibed, democracy stands out as having the most cutting edge at any rate for the poor and the exploited. Democracy, I can further add, does not guarantee anything, neither equality nor rights nor justice. What it does is to institute the possibilities of a social transformation through institutions, ideologies, and practices. People have to appropriate these to widen the arena of politics. Democracy itself has never delivered

anything to the people. Its institutions and practices can only provide a forum where people armed with rights can engage with each other and with society, sometimes in a non-conflictual manner, and sometimes in a conflictual manner.

The first section of the book ends with Achin Vanaik's incisive analysis of India's foreign policy. India's foreign policy perspectives, he argues, stand in disarray because of an objective factor—the end of the Cold War, and a more important subjective factor—the intellectual and political deficiencies of those who have influenced and conducted external relations. These people armed with their own narrow perspectives have failed to realize that a country's external policy is inextricably linked to its internal situation. A successful foreign policy can only be built on a democratic and egalitarian society, concludes Vanaik.

The second section of the book is organized around the theme of cultural practices in India. Tapati Guha Thakurta in an intricate and complex essay explores the manner in which 1947 was figured and institutionalized in art—in particular the staging of a large and spectacular exhibition of the masterpieces of Indian art at Government House in 1948 and the later setting up of a museum. Detailing the history and the genealogy of the various pieces that were exhibited, Thakurta argues that the display produced and perpetuated a visual canon as well as a sense of the national, presuming as it did the existence of a national community of citizen-viewers, "convinced of the sacral identity of art and fully attuned to the aesthetic and national connotations of the heritage displayed" (p. 122).

Madhava Prasad in a fascinating essay details the evolution of the film in India and its relationship with the state. From the beginning of cinema—the endeavours of Dadasaheb Phalke—the cinematic screen was regarded as the space in which the 'national' was constructed. The screen was to become an object of tussle, as indigenous filmmakers wrested it for their own imaginings. The state has at various times intervened for supportive, aesthetic and censoring reasons. Above all the film text produced the grounds of possibilities, as the state was defined and redefined through the narrative.

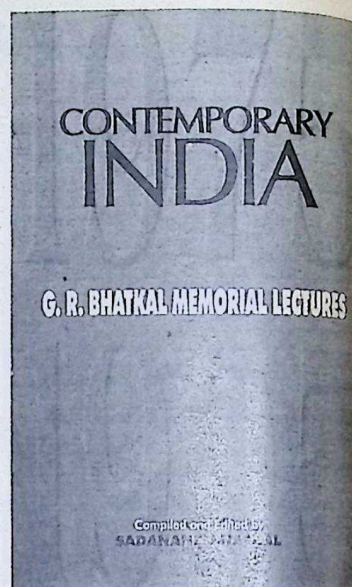
Sudipta Kaviraj examines the cultural portrayals of representative democracy, through an exploration of various forms—the way novel and films depicted the city for instance. "Democracy in the decades after independence was not merely a political principle; it also had a clearly marked space of resi-

dence. It was universally known to live in the city. The city had that mysterious quality, liberating and contaminating at the same time" (p. 149). Democracy brought in an enormous change in the language, culture, and schematics of the dislike people feel for their cultural superiors, and this has been made possible through the cultural structure of representativity—in songs for instance. Bombay films have intensified the culture of subordination but these forms have their limits—for films do not breed social egalitarianism but symbolic retribution through a great act of 'retributive humiliation'.

The third section on the 'long arm of hegemony' contains two pieces. Javed Alam acutely documents the search of the left for hegemony. Through a detailed exploration of struggles, official pronouncements of the communist parties, their positions on various issues, Alam concludes, that the communist parties have been obsessed with the status of the bourgeoisie. They, therefore, failed to address the question of the terrain that the Indian State has captured for itself; it has failed to see how the state has subsumed society. Aditya Nigam chronicles the debates and the shifts in the position of the CPM in some detail. The transformation of the CPM from a militant radical party to its reformist version is connected to the discourse of nationhood, he argues. Therefore, whereas in 1972, it could characterize India as a multinational state, today it is the only party that objects to the formation of an independent Uttarakhand.

In the last section titled 'From the Margins to the Centre', Nivedita Menon chronicles the shift in the debate on the uniform civil code, and the positions of various women's organizations on the issue, within a wider discussion of secularism. She suggests that secularism has been only about the modernizing impulses of the Indian elite and never about the relationship between the state and religions. Menon holds that we need to renegotiate the terms of the democratic project.

Kancha Ilaiah posits the Dalit Bahujan notion of the nation against the brahminical notion that to him is a fantasy. The Dalit bahujans on the other hand, want to build the nation based on a productive culture. The nation, he suggests, needs to be gradually dalitized. "Dalitization means universalizing the principles of labour as life and of democracy and equality as the aim of life with such an approach to work and life, we could build a real people's nation" (p. 291). M.S. Pandian details the new dalit writings from Tamil Nadu, which to him represent the master language of the nation.



Elaborating the Pondicherry Group's political agenda, he suggests that it has managed to elude the trap of the nation with admirable skill. Subir Bhattacharya deals in some detail with the rather neglected region of the North East, and chronicles the travails of the region—militancy, narcotics, the ravages of the army, the alienation of the people. Fifty years after Partition, he writes, India's North East remains the stepchild of the Republic. If a breakthrough is not achieved, he warns, the region will degenerate into another Bosnia and Colombia rolled into one, "where ethnic hostility and free flow of narcotics dependence on gun-power by the state and the communities will distort the region's politics, society and economy beyond repair. The Indian state will then be forced into retreat, and its authority in the North East will solely depend on military power, not on moral authority growing out of consensus and a sense of shared destiny" (p. 327). All in all a devastating analysis.

The second volume under review is a collection of lectures delivered in the space of twenty years. V.K.R.V. Rao's paper (in 1979) identifies the changes in the Indian economy since the advent of planned economic development through an analysis of National Accounts Data. He concludes that the Indian economy continues to be dominated by the primary sector and unorganized enterprises. V.M. Dandekar (in 1977) in his analysis of class conflict in India argues that farmers, agricultural labour, artisans, handicraftsmen, small industry and businessmen all of whom he calls the price takers, are leaving their trades behind and seeking wage employment in the organized sector, that is the price makers. They have nothing to lose but their petty property, and they gain an assured income

The inherent contradiction in everybody trying to be a price-maker, will then fall to the ground" (p. 69).

R.V. Nadkarni (in 1992) discusses the virtues of the private entrepreneur and that of cooperatives. Nani A. Talikhvala (in 1995) holds forth on education and the art of reading. For a nation, he states, there is nothing more satisfying than education in human values, and for an individual, nothing more satisfying than general reading in human values. R.N. Haldipur (in 1987) on education in a changing world dwells on the various travails of education in India. He also happens to believe that when you teach a woman, you teach an entire family [!]. B. Kuppaswamy (in 1981) concentrating on education once again, argues that just as there is something unique in Indian cooking and eating habits [even in these days of fast foods?], just as there is something unique in the aesthetic taste of an Indian, his attitude towards rivers and mountains, there is something unique in the Indian's culture and personality, and education should bring this forth. A.B. Shah (in 1976) again on education is far less sanguine about the possibilities of the educational system as it is at present.

Achyut Patwardhan (in 1980) talks of disillusionment and clarity, suggests that the best way to establish clarity is to reconnect with nature, then only will

man realize his true nature as a part of the eco-system and not as a ruler. U.R. Anantha Murthy (1983) in thoughts on contemporary culture raises vital questions of culture and of its authenticity, as well as its relationship to the West. Ashok Vajpeyi (in 1984) on literature in the 1980s suggests that with the decline in reading habits, literature has lost its relevance for the modern world. People would rather read glossies, for facing up to one's fate is no longer the concern of the contemporary man. Durga Bhagwat (in 1982) spins out the various implications of the freedom of thought. Reverend Griffiths (in 1984) on the new vision of reality, dwell on the implications that the philosophy of science holds for theology. Samuel Israel (in 1975) speaks on twenty-five years of Indian publishing.

Whereas the second book under review is disappointing—it cannot fail to be so, culled as it is from public lectures given at various points in history, *Wages of Freedom* is an interesting collection of—in some cases—brilliant articles, highlighting the various aspects and drawbacks of our fifty years of independence. Policy makers should make a point of reading it.

Neera Chandhoke is Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Delhi and currently Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow.

The Contemporary Mode

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

THE PARADOXES OF PARTITION, VOL. I, 1937-39

Edited by S.A.I. Tirmizi

Centre for Federal Studies, Jamia Hamdard, Manak Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. lxii+1017, Rs. 2950.00

COUNTDOWN TO PARTITION: THE FINAL DAYS

By Ajit Bhattacharjee

Harper Collins, India, New Delhi, 1997, pp. xxvii+112, Rs. 195.00

The international changes in the perception of history is a curious thing. I read somewhere of a survey done by the Education Faculty of a north American University, with one object of finding out how the young people perceive contemporary history. And a bright young spark said that the contemporary period began with the Beatles and the assassination of President Kennedy. And when did it begin for his parents? "For them it never began." If there has been any effort in India to find out how contemporaneity is thought of, I do not know of it.

Among professional historians in India a measure of recognition of the existence of contemporary history was the creation of one chair in one University about three decades ago; that apart, participation of historians in the exploration of contemporary history has been miniscule. What are they waiting for? Probably the opening up of the archives relating to recent times. That will be a long wait because of a statutory limitation debarring transfer of government records to the archives until they are forty years old. Moreover, the beauty of the system is that only when the

lapse of forty years is formally recognized and notified by the government, those years officially lapse. Then alone the transfer can be made and even then there will be restrictions on confidential and some other categories of documents. Historians who stand and wait may also serve, but, in the meanwhile, the journalists serve a lot better and produce works of contemporary history which are widely read.

There is, as of now, a great deal of interest in contemporary history, though its perception may differ between the older generation and the younger one. To the older generation it is often a nostalgia trip, to the younger it is filling up the yawning gap between what they are taught in the institutional education system and the here-and-now. A spate of publications and some I know of in the pipelines, indicate particular interest in the years preceding the Partition and Independence. S.A.I. Tirmizi and Ajit Bhattacharjee address that interest in different ways. Tirmizi writes as an archivist and Bhattacharjee as a journalist summing up the news of the day, supplemented by documents published later.

The collection of documents relating to the decade preceding the Partition is an ongoing scheme under the direction of Tirmizi. Many like myself would remember him as the Director of the National Archives. His current project has yielded the present volume after seven years and two more are expected to be published later. This volume consists of extracts from over five hundred documents from archives and depositories in India, England and Pakistan. Some of these documents have been published before in previous collections, e.g. the selections from Rajendra Prasad Papers, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, or collections published in Pakistan. Nevertheless, there is much that is new, i.e. unpublished till now, and of particular importance are documents from the Jinnah Papers and National Archives of Pakistan, rather inaccessible to most Indian historians.

Bhattacharjee is a contemporary observer of the historical events he describes in the last few weeks before Partition. He was, I gather, a reporter in *Hindustan Times* at that time. Unfortunately whatever might have been his own experience in those eventful days, he fails to utilize that. Instead he depends on old newspapers and the correspondence of political leaders published later (without citation of sources). Perhaps as a concession to the readership it was written for—this was serialized in a weekly—the author simplifies things a bit and allows some stereotypes and musty old phrases (Patel the "ironman of Congress", "the scholarly

Maulana", Jinnah "a brilliant, vain and solitary figure" march in, in the first few pages, xxii-xxv).

Bhattacharjee's main point in a rather flat narrative of what happened each week between the middle of May and August, seems to be that Mahatma Gandhi was uncompromising in his rejection of the idea of Pakistan and that the Congress leaders refused to listen to him. This is not an unfamiliar story. However, the real story may be a little more complex. Consider, for example, Gandhi's advice to Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of Subhas Chandra, and a major provincial leader opposed to Partition. Gandhi wrote to him on 8 June 1947 that it was better to agree to "a frank partition, it being a recognition of the division of hearts." (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 88) Bhattacharjee does not notice this and similar other statements which suggest an inconsistency. It was an inconsistency born of the moral tension of a man forced to accept by the circumstances an idea which was morally repugnant to him. Gandhi's utterances, specially in the prayer meetings, are indeed touching: "All around me is utter darkness".

Tirmizi's collection of documents is valuable not only because it draws from archives in Pakistan which few Indians have used, but also because there is in evidence an effort to make the collection representative of diverse points of view and political parties. Its main shortcoming is that the focus is entirely on the political leaders and the decision-makers in government, excluding movements from below i.e. the numerous popular movements which formed the mosaic of politics, particularly with the formation of provincial governments from 1937. Basically the collection of focuses on 'Central politics', and thus the ghost of Nicolas Mansergh rides again towards the event supposed to be the central thing, the Transfer of Power. Nevertheless, this collection is a valuable addition to our knowledge of some aspects of the politics of 1937-39 and in particular the politics of communalism.

Tirmizi has, as he says, "drawn relatively few conclusions leaving the documents to speak for themselves" (p. viii). Bhattacharjee offers a résumé of news. If the historians' job is to go beyond to conjecture into the trends of long duration connecting the past with our here-and-now, their agenda is self-evident. That agenda needs to be addressed now.

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya is Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

An Enduring Commemoration Volume

Narayani Gupta

MODERN SOUTH ASIA: HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICAL ECONOMY

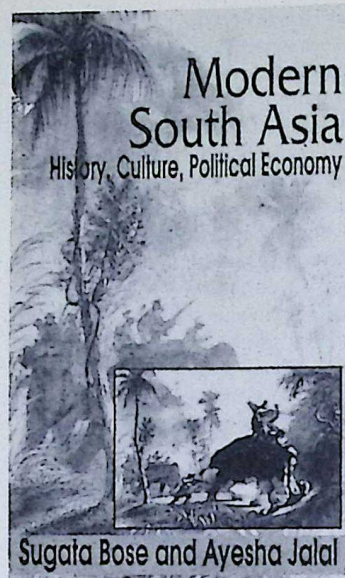
By Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, pp. x+302, glossary, bibliography, index, maps and photographs, Rs. 425.00

In the U.S.A., most academics, at some time or other, write a textbook. In India we launch 'series/s' which always remain incomplete. Therefore good short histories of India are always welcome—for teachers, students and lay readers. Perhaps the best-known is the two-volume Penguin history by Romila Thapar and Percival Spear. Spear wrote yet another general history for the Michigan series. Stanley Wolpert's book has gone into many editions, and is familiar to all American students of India. Judith Brown's book on modern India (1985) carried the history up to the 1980s while Sumit Sarkar (1982) began the story in 1885, when the Indian G.D.P. was established, and stopped at 1947 (all teachers and students in India subscribe to the orthodoxy that as my son, then in school, explained to me, in 1947 'history' ends and 'civics' begins). The present book has been written by two highly talented and productive young historians, one from Pakistan and one from India, both now teaching in the U.S.A. This partnership in itself makes the book significant because this is a work on South Asia, not just on India. The authors

begin by dedicating the book to the next generation, and end with the hope of "a better South Asia based on mutual understanding and cooperation at the dawn of the next century". In a post-Pokhran-2 world, this spirit is a welcome ray of hope.

This deserves to go down as one of the most enduring of the commemorations of the 50th Anniversary. It is brief—250 pages as against Judith Brown's 400. There are two chapters on earlier history, and half the book (as with Brown) is devoted to the period after the First World War. This section is without doubt the most confidently written. For readability it comes a close second to Spear which, written in the pageant-of-Viceroy mould of the 1950s, has become a period-piece. Lucid and elegant, uncluttered with jargon, it is enlivened with quotations from poets ranging from Akbar Allahabadi to W.H. Auden, and occasional delightful turns of phrase like the description of the British Indian army as "a domestic rod of order and an international fire brigade". There is a conscious attempt to notice women—there is a photograph of the magnificent tomb of Bibi Jiwandi (who was she?); the grand ladies at the Mughal Court, who hailed from Central Asia and Iran as well as India; the nameless victims of the savagery of 1947. . . The authors step skilfully over the rocks and thorny bushes as well as the tempting green meadows of various historiographical fashions—post-colonial, post-structural, post-modern, post-orientalist. . . which in the last twenty years have often impaled bewildered students on the dilemma of whether or not to comment on the Emperor's 'new' clothes. In a brief survey (pp. 8–11) Ranajit Guha and the subalternists and Edward Said have been discussed; they are also frequently cited as are Partha Chatterjee, Chris Bayly and Muzaffar Alam. What is a great pity, however, is that few



other scholars have been. Dozens of times it is stated that 'recent research' or 'modern historians' have modified earlier assumptions. But in the absence of citations, serious scholars will not be able to follow up the issues. While a good textbook is the distilled essence of many monographs, the best textbook is one which lists not an arbitrary fifteen-or-so books per chapter but in the course of the narrative opens doors to many other rooms where the reader can wander. Again, there are tantalizing half-statements. We would love to know, for instance, which two nationalist leaders Tagore called 'modernist' (p. 12).

As with practically every book on 'Indian' history, the 'south' gets marginalized (I do not know who coined the cliché 'the Hindi heartland' (p. 224) but it is time we gave it up). The uninformed may not realize that Mapillas (p. 86) are Muslim; the 'Coromandal Coast' on p. 33 ought to read 'the Malabar coast'; the 'Carnatic courts' on p. 55 refer to Tanjavur, Madurai and Thiruvananthapuram, none of which is in present-day Karnataka; the 'varna-defined caste system' (p. 74) does not make it clear that in the caste terminology of the south there were two main categories—brahmins and sudras; the terms 'Kshatriya' and 'Vaisya' were not in common use (which is why the Kerala Nairs who would see themselves as warriors and scribes, were termed 'sudras'). The 'South' is far from undifferentiated as we 'Madrasis' (Chennai?)—the Islam of Kerala and Tirunelveli described by Susan Bayly (referred to on p. 33) is different from that of Bijapur and later Hyderabad, which had direct links with Iran. It is useful to recall that the earliest literary

While a good textbook is the distilled essence of many monographs, the best textbook is one which lists not an arbitrary fifteen-or-so books per chapter but in the course of the narrative opens doors to many other rooms where the reader can wander.

Urdu was the Dakhani of Golconda. Moving north, the print of the Qutb Minar on p. 22 shows it not as it was when 'completed by Iltutmish' but with the two marble-faced stories added by Ferozshah as well as the Chhatra of Colonel Robert Smith. The Hardinge bomb attack (p. 122) occurred in Chandni Chowk, not in New Delhi, which did not exist then.

Political and economic history, for most part, have been analysed in a serious and engaged manner. But there are major omissions. There is, amazingly, no reference to Communist governments in Kerala and West Bengal, to EMS or to Jyoti Basu's record innings! The Chipko movement, the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the success story of the Grameen Bank, are at least as important as details of L.K. Advani's fancy-dress *yatras*. Is it possible that the occasional exhilaration and sense of achievement we feel in India does not get across to non-resident scholars, who are quicker to notice puffs of black smoke than the straws in the wind? Also, sadly, as with most writings on India, there is little on 'culture' (though it figures in the title). Admittedly our three countries between them have an awesome tally of 'problems', of injustice, of strife. But they also embody creativity, beauty, celebration, humour. The changes in the arts practised and patronized, in townscapes, reactions to monumental architecture, changes in lifestyles and in domestic interiors, could have found a place, however, briefly. Of course the authors are justified in arguing that "a single volume can only offer a glimpse of its richness and nuance", but with a good angle of vision it could be a penetrating and insightful glimpse (p. 3). We see the players, but not the costumes, the ambience. We read their speeches, but miss the humour and the banter. Indian history could do with an Eric Hobsbawm, if not a Richard Cobb.

Narayani Gupta teaches in the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Lores of Freedom

I.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan

THE PROUDEST DAY: INDIA'S LONG MARCH TO INDEPENDENCE

By Anthony Read and David Fisher

Jonathan Cape, 1997, pp. 565, Rs. 595.00

INDIA'S PARTITION

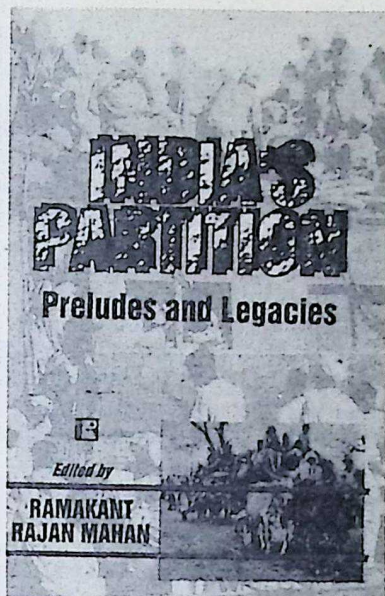
Edited by Ramakant and Rajan Mahan

Rawat Publications, 1998, pp. 377, Rs. 600.00

JINNAH

By Ajeet Jawed

Kitab Publishing House, 1998, pp. 318, Rs. 400.00



Around 2,000 books and perhaps twice that number of academic articles have been written about the freedom movement and India's Partition in 1947. Approximately a quarter of these have been written after the secret papers of the British government began to be available to researchers in the late 1960s. So veteran readers of the lore should stand warned. These books contain nothing that is even remotely new. Neither facts nor insights. Indeed, had it not been for the 50th anniversary of India's independence—and Pakistan's too—it is unlikely that the first two books would have ever been produced.

The first book is, in fact, very much the product of the trend generated by market forces which treats all major anniversaries as an occasion to sell souvenirs. Books are simply just another class of souvenirs. It covers the period from about 1900 to 1947 and tells the story of, well, India's long march to independence. Only the facts are stated; the motives are left out almost entirely.

The second book is the result of the usual tokenism, namely, a seminar to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Independence. The third book, which is about Jinnah, appears to be a labour of love. But sadly, the ardour is not matched by academic excellence. On the whole, therefore, all three books are a disappointment. Nevertheless, Messrs. Read and Fisher have at least written a very readable book, especially for newcomers to the lore. They must be congratulated for their diligence and patience in writing about events in a faraway land, in a faraway time and about people who are now even further away—beyond the pale, in fact. Besides, the passage of time and repeated portrayals, have made them into cardboard characters.

In spite of the diligence, the result isn't quite in the class of *Freedom at Midnight*, at least as far as the thriller genre goes. But, in some sense, it could be argued that this is its main strength. After all, it is pretty irritating to read phrases like "Gandhi mumbled" or "Jinnah trembled" or "Nehru dissembled". That sort of Woodward and Bernstein style can end up making a dog's breakfast of even popular history.

The important thing is that Read and Fisher have got their facts right and the narration is brisk and peppered with quotes. So novice readers of the history of that period will not find it a waste of time, or even money, should they happen to purchase it. It gives a broad and accurate view of the politics that went on. For the experts, however, it is at best a browse, that too not a compulsory one.

There's also that other pitfall of popular history: the need for maintaining a supposed balance between the main *dramatis personae*. It is never very clear in such books who the heroes and the villains were. There are no good guys and bad guys and that makes such volumes confusing. If you are not going to take sides, why bother to tell the story?

Since this is often a problem, British journalists have found a typically sly answer: they tend to blame mainly Britain for the division of India. This is true, of course, but it suffers from one fatal defect: it lets off the Indian politicians too lightly. True, that way the product is acceptable on both sides of Wagah. But it is altogether too contrived. During the last one year, I have read nine books on the Partition and the events that went before it, written by British authors and published in Britain. Five of these were of the popular genre. Each of them suffered from the same basic flaw—an exaggerated devotion to journalistic balance regardless of the facts.

This is not to say that such balance is undesirable. But when it ends up offering no judgements at the end of a long read, preferring to leave it to subtle suggestion, the technique becomes suspect. The logic of following it, come what may, seems to be that India may be the bigger market but Pakistan, too, offers some sales. No point in offending anyone. Read and Fisher's offering is no exception to what seems to have become an unstated rule firmly laid down by British publishers.

So the result is a bit like Pathak's Biryani Paste. It fails to ignite those famously lascivious subcontinental passions which curries are meant to ignite. Instead, it is more like what the British disgustingly call the Toad-in-the-Hole—a bland pastry with a sausage stuck in the middle.

Happily, the second book offers a much richer fare. It has resulted from a seminar held in Jaipur under the auspices of the South Asia Centre of the University of Jaipur. Assuch, it consists of a collection of papers which were presented at the seminar. Several scholars attended the seminar and their views are worth a quick run-through. It is interesting that, while the current

generation of the British are busy blaming Britain for the Partition, several Indians are busy blaming the Congress—specifically Nehru and Patel—for it. Several of the contributors to this volume make this point, namely, that had it not been for the Congress, the Cabinet Mission Plan would have been accepted and it might have prevented Partition.

This view suffers from an excessive dose of liberalitis. Of course, if the Cabinet Mission Plan had been accepted by the Congress—the League and Jinnah had accepted it—Partition might have been avoided. But it must also be remembered that it would have amounted to renouncing everything that the Congress had stood for. The issue, after all, was whether the Congress spoke for all Indians or only the Hindus. The Cabinet Mission Plan implicitly assumed the latter view and this was clearly unacceptable.

But this fashion apart—every discipline must have its own fads and history is no exception—there are some very thought-provoking essays in the collection. Two are especially good. One for its unusual treatment of Paul Scott, the man who wrote the Raj Quartet and the other for its unequivocal view that it was Jinnah, and Jinnah alone, who was responsible for the Partition. The essay on Paul Scott is by Robin Moore who has specialized on the freedom movement and the Partition that it led to in 1947. Moore has taken an unusual approach to interpreting Scott and the result is not only highly readable but also provocative.

On balance, however, it might have been useful if the organizers of the seminar had asked the participants for more narrowly focussed papers. Their failure to do so has resulted in the broadbrush approach which was alright in 1970 (as seen in the volume edited by C.H. Phillips and M.D. Wainright) but almost three decades on is merely tiresome. A lot of research has become available since then and the seminar should have raised very specific questions not just relating to the period up to 1947 but also to the three years immediately following. By all accounts, those years are equally, if not more, fascinating. But somehow history, at least for historians, seems to stop at midnight on August 14–15, 1947.

The third volume under review here is by a woman who has devoted a lot of effort in proving that Jinnah wasn't such an ogre. In fact, she says, he was a rather decent sort and had it not been for the strange antics of Gandhiji and the Congress, he would have turned out just fine.

Maybe so. Maybe Jinnah was hard done by at the hands of the Hindu

Secular and Nationalist



Jinnah

Dr. Ajeet Jawed

Mahasabha and the Congress, not to mention Gandhiji whose accession to Congress leadership after the Nagpur Congress in 1920 greatly discomfited Jinnah (who was literally shouted down and retired from the stage with tears in his eyes). Maybe it can also be conceded that Jinnah was a far greater rationalist and secularist than Gandhiji was. But the fact remains: had it not been for his insistence that he alone spoke for the Muslims of India, the British would not have got their opportunity to divide India.

For hard as Jawed might try, the truth is that the Great Game had begun as far back as the 1890s when Principal Archbold of the Aligarh Muslim University and Harcourt Butler had conspired to put the wind up the Muslim feudal lords of Punjab and Bengal about Hindu domination. Jinnah was only a cog in that game and, as Ayesha Jalal (a Pakistani historian) has so brilliantly shown, he ended up representing the feudal lords of Punjab and Bengal because they thought he was the only one suited to deal with the British on their behalf. He spoke the language of the *frangi* while they didn't.

The process was nowhere as simple as Jawed believes it to be. To be sure Jinnah was a decent man, a constitutionalist, a liberal, secular and everything that is required in a good and moral politician. But he was also a puppet in the hands of three marionettes—the British, the Unionist Party of Punjab and the Krishak Party of Bengal.

What a pity that Ajeet Jawed fails to recognize this. Had she done so, we might have had a far better biography.

T.C.A. Srinivasa-Raghavan is with the *Business Standard*.

Coming to Terms With History

Gillian Wright

THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE: VOICES FROM THE PARTITION OF INDIA

By Urvashi Butalia

Viking, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 278, Rs. 295.00

At the gate of Humayun's tomb a member of staff of the Archaeological Survey was scanning his newspaper.

"Much cooler today," I remarked.

"Yes, it rained in Shimla," he replied, "Hot winds blow in Rajasthan, and Delhi gets hot. It rains in Shimla, and it gets cooler. Delhi doesn't have any weather of its own, just like it doesn't have any people of its own. You won't find anyone who really belongs to this city, except on Daryaganj side—and they're Muslims."

A lot of people in Delhi don't belong, as he understood it, because they are refugees, and the children of refugees, who came here from East Punjab at Partition.

One of them is Urvashi Butalia. She wrote this book because her family had been uprooted and divided. This book is really her voice, her story, her attempt to comprehend Partition.

"For my mother Subhadra and my father Joginder Who taught me about Partition For Ranamama, my uncle Who lives in Partition from day to day And for my grandmother Dayawanti/Ayesha Whose life Partition shaped As it did her death."

Few dedications arouse such curiosity. What happened to Dayawanti/Ayesha? If you've read the recent Indian volume of *Granta*, you'll know the story, told again here. Urvashi's own Partition experience is in fact the only one in *The Other Side of Silence* which is truly first hand. It is also the single most compelling piece of writing in the book.

The main figure in the division of the Butalia family was Ranamama, who decided to stay in Lahore at Independence although his brothers and sisters came to India. They wanted to take their mother with them, but Ranamama didn't let her leave. The property was in her name. To live more easily in his new country he converted to Islam, and made his mother do the same. The family in India never knew. Then finally Urvashi went to Lahore. There was reunion, and then gradually separation.

"For a long time afterwards," she writes, "I found it difficult to talk about that parenthetical time in my life."

Urvashi's uncle had never spoken

about how Partition affected him until he talked to her.

"My child," he said, "this is the first time I am speaking to my own blood... You, you understand what it is I'm talking about. That is why you are here on this search. You know. Even if nothing else ever happens, I know that you have been sent here to lighten my load."

These are two individual silences. Millions of other people have their own.

The Other Side of Silence is the title Urvashi chooses for her book. There are the silences of those that died, whose stories can never be told. There are the silences of women, particularly women abducted during Partition, of children and of Dalits. None of their voices are represented in the conventional history books of Independence, and these are the voices Urvashi is anxious that we should hear.

Her aim is to present an alternative picture of Partition to be read alongside conventional histories to help to reinterpret them. As she writes, "Perhaps more than any other event in modern Indian history Partition lives on in family histories particularly in north India, where tales of horror and brutality, the friendship and sharing, are told and retold between communities, families and friends... This collection of memories... are the ways in which we can know this event. In many senses, they are the history of the event."

Remembering she believes is important in order to come to terms with history, to be able to forget.

This book could have been just a collection of interviews. Urvashi interviewed some seventy witnesses to Partition at random over a decade. All of them were from Punjab, and all of them from India because it wasn't possible for her to do similar research in Pakistan. She does though include Pakistani voices from other sources where she can. She says that she pursued her task "obsessively" and that she could think of little else for these years. This is one point where there seems to be a little exaggeration. Seventy interviews over ten years is after all only seven a year, and for her chapter on Dalits she only found one interviewee.

In fact she reproduces at length only a few of these seventy interviews and they are, she writes, "the stories that



meant the most to me, stories of people with whom I have formed real friendships, or stories to which I keep returning again and again." Readers of this book too return to these stories again and again, as they are mentioned in one chapter, quoted in parts in another as well as being reproduced almost in total. Several stories, including her own family's, are told from the perspective of more than one of the persons. This is at least the antithesis of the soundbyte, and there is no mistaking the context from which quotations are taken. Repetition etches each story into memory. It is as well the technique of the oral story-teller. But it does encourage the reader to skip. This is also the case because many of the author's passionately considered arguments are repeated too. There is hardly an idea which makes its appearance only once.

Urvashi seems too attached to her interview "material". As she points out there is a big difference between the spoken and written word, and many nuances are lost when speech becomes text. This is even more true when the text is translated from another language. There are many places where this text is confusing, and requires more editing.

It's therefore perhaps best that this book doesn't consist only of interviews. Most of it is made up of what Urvashi terms "analytical chapters" where she tries to discover the different truths of Partition. As she writes, "there were their stories, as they told them, and there was what I learnt and understood from these stories." In these chapters she interweaves her thoughts with Partition survivors' memories, newspaper reports, written memoirs and government records. The dominant voice throughout is her own, the voice of a very sincere, caring and intelligent individual, committed to feminism and to peace.

"If this account is read as history, it may well be thrown out the door," Urvashi admits, and she has a point. Her facts and figures are sometimes badly sourced—the often quoted figure of 75,000 women abducted at Partition seems to come from just one social worker. Her feminist baggage occasionally weighs heavy, for example in her statement, although qualified, that for the majority of Indian women, marriage is like an abduction anyway, a violation, an assault, usually by an unknown man." Over-simplification can be misleading. Stating that Dalits had been given separate electorates in 1939 and the Poona Pact in 1932 "partially reversed this" is inaccurate.

But despite these weaknesses, all her hard work, all her passion and compassion, have succeeded in producing a book which is deeply disturbing, which does clearly depict the tragedies of individual victims of Partition. It should help in understanding, and perhaps in forgetting.

Describing the run-up to August 1947, she quotes from an angry letter written to the AICC in May that year by B. Kripalani. "Can you please let us know," he wrote, "what areas have been allotted to migrants? What provisions have been made so far to get them settled honourably? Where should they migrate? In what numbers and in what manner?" There were of course no answers. And not one of the ten expert committees set up to deal with various aspects of Partition under the Indian

Independence Act dealt with the problems of refugees, although plans were drawn up to duplicate thousands of files for Pakistan.

It was sometimes difficult even for the men of the armed forces to decide which side they belonged. Urvashi tells the story of Abdul Shudul who came from India and opted for India, then finding his family had left for Pakistan he went there. There he was entangled in military bureaucracy and among strangers who didn't mix with refugees, and so he returned home. For him, and perhaps for many ordinary people, "nation and country seemed to have meant little... The important thing was to be where there was work, and family."

Many other ordinary people joined the qafilas which walked across the border. One of the first long interviews in this book is with Rajinder Singh who describes the fear and grief of his walk into India. "When we got to Dera Baba Nanak they said to us, you have come home. But we thought, our home was over there. We have left it behind. How can this be home?"

Urvashi's task in representing the voices of children was perhaps the hardest. Many children were killed, and some were killers. Many disappeared. They were sold into prostitution and exploited as beggars. Some children were put up for adoption, but the adoptive parents were not well screened and girls were taken for cheap domestic labour. Some children, like Kulwant Singh were left with permanent psy-

chological problems. His deepest memory is of lying by the body of his father, surrounded by fire.

The author's lone Dalit witness, Maya, defines herself firstly as a Dalit and only then as a woman—which must have been a shock for a committed feminist. Maya and her friends looted houses during the riots, which for them were between caste Hindus and Muslims, and therefore nothing to do with their community. This experience of being outsiders to violence was not unique. After the Rawalpindi riots in March 1947, the General Secretary of the All India Scheduled Caste Federation found that the only time Dalits were affected by the riots was when they were mistaken for caste Hindus. Urvashi also looks at the discrimination against Dalits in refugee camps, and how Dalits were discouraged from migrating as their traditional services were needed in Pakistan.

The best researched and strongest section of the book though deals with women's experiences, and concentrates on abducted women and those who were killed by their own families. And yet there is not a single interview with an abducted woman. This is a conscious decision, a silence imposed by Urvashi herself, to respect the privacy of these women. "Not only had they very effectively been rendered invisible, but many of them wanted to stay that way, their stories held closely to them. It was as if the memory of the rape, the experience of abduction, was in some way

shameful and had therefore to be relegated to the realm of amnesia."

Urvashi does quote though from social workers who worked with abducted women, and from the Constituent Assembly where their fate was debated, and where the attitude of the speakers is most revealing. She also reproduces a page of a government list of 21,809 names of Hindu and Sikh women and children who had been abducted or reported missing at Partition. It was compiled to help in their search and recovery. The list has one column headed "Particulars of abductors" which shows that many women were abducted not by strangers but by men of the same village. Large numbers of women in their fifties and sixties had been taken, according to social workers, because after the deaths of the male members of their families they owned property. Their abductors then became their adopted "sons" for the sake of that property.

In September 1947 Pakistan and India agreed on a mechanism for the recovery of abducted women. They decided that the proper home for Hindu and Sikh women was India, and for Muslim women Pakistan. The women themselves could not choose their nation, neither did they have any choice in being recovered. Once they were located, they were forcibly evacuated. The search went on for nine years after Partition, some 22,000 Muslim women were recovered from India, and 8,000 Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan.

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One woman social worker describes disguising herself as an egg seller and going from village to village in search of information. Dr Sushila Nayyar, Mahatma Gandhi's doctor, on one occasion failed to locate a woman who was hidden, bound and gagged. Luckily the woman later escaped and was able to find her husband.

Not all women even wanted to be returned, mainly because they had children by their new husbands. When they were brought back, many families didn't want them as they were "soiled". Some women lived out their lives in what were meant to be temporary ashrams. Other families would take the women back but without their children. Many women were pregnant when they returned. At a time when abortion was illegal, social workers confirmed that mass abortions were encouraged. Women who did give birth to the children of their abductors, wept as they bade farewell to their infants who were put in baskets and flown from Delhi to a special orphanage in Allahabad. They were promised that they could be in touch with their children, a promise which the authorities didn't keep.

Urvashi discusses how these women were seen as the national honour, rather than individuals. She discovered that male refugees remembered their women who were killed but found it difficult to mention those who were abducted.

Some women were killed by members of their own families. Urvashi found that these women and children were regarded as martyrs. Her witnesses to such killings include Mangal Singh who, with his brothers, killed seventeen women and children of his family, to Vasant Kaur, who with ninety other women and children tried to commit suicide by jumping into a well, and to her son Bir Bahadur Singh.

In Vasant Kaur's interview the difference between a female and male perception of an event becomes apparent. In her telling the deaths are devoid of heroism, in her son's they are replete with it. Several women and children of Vasant Kaur's family offered themselves to be killed by their own menfolk to prevent them falling into the hands of the Muslims, to preserve the community's honour. Vasant Kaur describes how she and the other women then jumped into a well but how she could not die. "It's like when you put rotis into a tandoor and if it is too full, the ones near the top, they don't cook, they have to be taken out. So the well filled up, and we could not drown."

Urvashi questions the motives for these deaths within families. Were the women, she asks, "acting upon a per-

ceived (or rather misperceived) notion of the good of their community?" She thinks that the "lines between choice and coercion must have been more blurred than these accounts reflect." Perhaps what she underestimates is fear, both among men and women. Riots are more dangerous than wars because there are no rules at all. As Bir Bahadur Singh told her, "They kept on setting fire to the houses, and fire is such a scary thing, and the moment a person sees smoke, he gets frightened." Perhaps there seemed no choice at all. "A father who kills his daughter," said Bir Bahadur Singh, "how much of a victim, how helpless he must be."

Trust was also a victim of Partition. Bir Bahadur Singh told of how some Muslim friends had come and offered to shelter his family, but they had mistakenly refused. Urvashi more than once refers to refugees "harking back to an—often mythical—past where Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs lived together in relative peace and harmony." This is a strange statement because she has no evidence of the mythical nature of this relative peace.

In fact at the close of her book she cites a story with a very different message. Chaudhry Latif had occupied the house of the migrant Harikishan Das Bedi in Lahore. Bedi had left all his writings there, and wrote to "The Occupant" for them. Latif sent them gradually back to him in bundles over the years, and carefully kept all Bedi's letters to him until his death.

Bedi wrote to him, "I read your letter over and over again and felt that it had been written by a true friend. I also read it out to many of my friends. All agree that had all Hindus and Muslims shared the feelings which you have expressed... the bloodbath would never have taken place and we, living in India and Pakistan, would have taken our countries to great heights. But God had other plans. I shudder to think of what Hindus and Muslims have done to their fellow countrymen... And the worst part is that it was all perpetrated in the name of religion. No religion allows such bloodletting."

Urvashi wants to explore such friendships when and if she writes another book on Partition. I am sure such a book could be, like this, a valuable effort in understanding Partition. But then she will have to admit that for such friendships there must have been a past—often not mythical—where people did live together in relative peace.

Gillian Wright is an Urdu scholar and has translated two novels, Raag Darbari and Adha Gaon.

Calcutta's Colonial Taj Mahal

Subhadra Sen Gupta

THE VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL CALCUTTA: CONCEPTION, COLLECTIONS, CONSERVATION

Edited by Philippa Vaughan

Marg Publications, Bombay, 1997, pp. 160, Rs. 1850.00

As a non-resident Bengali, whenever I went to Calcutta as a child, the family would offer the Great Calcutta Tour. It included the National Museum, Outram Ghat, the zoo and the star of the show—old "Bhiktoria". The Victoriana Memorial was Calcutta's colonial Taj Mahal but I was never very impressed by what the city had to offer. After all, as a hard core Dilliwalla I had older and much more interesting monuments literally in my backyard. Right in the next lane from our home in Daryaganj there was the Ghata Masjid, beyond it the soaring minarets of the Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk and all of Red Fort. And that was just a fraction of what I could show them on their visits to Delhi. So I'll admit, till I grew up and got interested in Lord Curzon and discovered the magic of the paintings of the Daniells, I did not take the Victoria Memorial very seriously.

Actually, for years no one took the Victoria Memorial seriously, especially not the Government. It was not in the news except during sporadic attacks of bewildering national pride among our politicians. Like when they replaced the statue of Curzon with an oddly hunched, out of proportion figure of Shri Aurobindo, looking highly uncomfortable in the imperial surroundings. But then when have politicians had any sense of history anyway? So the incomparable collection of paintings inside mouldered away, bats and pigeons made their homes in the halls and rain water seeped in to damage the walls.

Fortunately some people had not forgotten the old lady. In 1989 as a reaction to the concern felt about the survival of the Victoria Memorial by the Chairman, trustees and the then curator, Dr. Hiren Chakraborti—a group led by Alan Tritton and his friends formed the Calcutta Tercentenary Trust. Conservation work was begun after raising money in India and overseas. Experts in the various fields of restoration of canvas, paper, even

picture frames were generously provided by various museums and galleries in England. The work for this Indo-British project was not just of restoring the paintings but also of training people in India so that restoration and maintenance could continue later. The first project has restored eighty-two paintings that are ready for display.

This excellent Marg publication not only describes the work of the Trust but also chronicles the history of the Victoria Memorial. There are articles on the collection, a profile of Lord Curzon and fascinating details of the actual restoration work. The heavy duty panel of writers include art historians like Philippa Vaughan, G.H.R. Tillotson and Derek Linstrum as also scholars like Narayani Gupta and Tapati Guha-Thakurta and experts in the various fields of conservation like Rupert Featherstone and Victoria Marsland-Boyer.

This book, like all Marg publications, is designed with sensitivity and produced with meticulous care, with high quality reproduction of photographs and paintings. It is always such a pleasure to open a Marg book, in its large generous format, elegantly designed pages and meticulous scholarship in the writing. If interest in India's heritage has been kept alive for lay readers like me, it has much to do with the joy these books and the Marg magazine has given us over the years.

Philippa Vaughan begins the book with a plea for the restoration and care of the art collection at the Victoria Memorial which according to her is the "finest group of oil paintings in the world by European artists active in India between 1780 and 1830. It is larger and more important than those of the Tate Gallery, London and the Mellon Collection of Art at Yale University, USA." These are some of the best works of these artists like the oil paintings by the Daniells—Thomas and William Johann Zoffany, William Hodges, Thomas Hickey and Baltazard Solvyns. There is also an impressive collection of

After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Lord Curzon conceived of a memorial in the memory of the Empress of India, paid for by her loyal Indian subjects of course. Then in his usual autocratic style he declared it was to be not just a memorial to a queen but also symbol of the "continued beneficence of British rule". Right from the start, the Victoria Memorial was his personal project and he disdainfully ignored even the mildest of opposition that he encountered on the way.

art on paper like the drawings, water colours and aquatints by Samuel Davis. Lord Curzon did much to save our heritage from pillage and neglect, may be it is time we paid him back by restoring his imperial dream to its old majesty.

After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, Lord Curzon conceived of a memorial in the memory of the Empress of India, paid for by her loyal Indian subjects of course. Then in his usual autocratic style he declared it was to be not just a memorial to a queen but also symbol of the "continued beneficence of British rule". Right from the start, the Victoria Memorial was his personal project and he disdainfully ignored even the mildest of opposition that he encountered on the way. As Tillotson notes with amusement, "he doused much critics in a torrent of patrician eloquence". Though when he left India in 1905, the work was still going on, he had the satisfaction of leaving his mark on the Indian landscape like the Mughals that he had so admired.

Curzon visualized the Victoria Memorial as a sort of museum cum art gallery not just for exhibits on the glories of the Raj but also of the pre-colonial era. As Narayani Gupta puts it, Curzon planned a "part portrait gallery, part gallery of art, and part simply durbar". It was to be a sort of moving history lesson, a visual bioscope of the Indian landscape and the greats through portraits. That is, portraits of people whom Curzon believed to be the greats. So in this Indian valhalla Tipu Sultan and Nawab Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh were admitted but Nana Saheb and other leaders of the 1857 uprising were left waiting at the door.

The emphasis of course was to be primarily British, or in the soaring oratory of the Viceroy himself, "a standing record of our wonderful history, a visible monument of Indian glories, and an illustration more eloquent than any spoken address or printed page, of the lessons of public patriotism and civic duty". His words have an echo of the

announcement of a thousand year Raj and the man would have been sorely disappointed if he had known how soon his imperial dream would vanish. Of course, compared to the other marble memorial that Curzon had so admired, this building could only be a visual symbol of the power and majesty of his solemn sovereign. At the Taj Mahal at least the lady in question is actually buried there in the company of her husband.

The whole theatre of royal structures appealed to a dramatic man like Curzon, whose admirable efforts to conserve Indian monuments are still remembered by tourist guides in Agra. He had fallen in love with the Taj Mahal when he saw it first in 1887, he could think of no monument in the world that was superior. Later his greatest efforts were dedicated to the Taj, where careful repairs were carried out, the gardens landscaped and his search for an appropriate lamp for the crypt finally ended in Cairo. So it was but natural that his memorial would be inspired by the Taj and visualized as a marble monument gleaming at the end of green lawns and silver pools of water.

Curzon's taste in buildings was classical, one reason he related so strongly to Mughal creations and not to the more exuberantly decorated Hindu temples of the south. In his mind the memorial was to be more Italian Renaissance than India. And of course he was not at a loss of words to state his opinion: "In Calcutta, a city of European origin and construction—where all the main buildings had been erected in a quasi-classical or Palladian style, and which possessed no indigenous architectural type of its own—it was impossible to erect a building in any native style. A Moghul building would have been ridiculous in the commercial and official capital of India, and quite unsuited for the memorial of a British Sovereign". So the job for an English architect was to transpose a classical European building with Mughal grandeur onto Calcutta's tropical landscape.

The final choice of the architect was a bit of a surprise. William Emerson was enthusiastic about incorporating Indian elements into his buildings and had built the flamboyant Muir College in Allahabad with its Islamic dome and arches. But at Curzon's orders he "obediently produced a design which is predominantly classical... The Indian details are still present, though now somewhat furtive." Vincent Esch as superintending architect was the man on the spot who saw it to its completion in 1921. But the memorial's glory was somewhat dimmed by the events that followed Curzon's departure. By then Calcutta was no longer the capital and Lutyens and Baker were grabbing the headlines with their design for New Delhi.

The three articles on the actual restoration work being done on canvas, paper and frames open a window to the world where meticulous craftsmanship comes touched by a true love for art. These paintings had been badly neglected so far and the photographs of the paintings before and after restoration show the dramatic result. Years of accumulated dirt, decaying varnish, ham-handed repairs and Calcutta's own contribution of damp, fungus and insects had nearly finished off this collection.

Featherstone also addresses the delicate question of just how far restoration should go. It is the old battle of restoration vs conservation—restoring a work of art through repair and disguise of the damage versus conservation that only checks further decay. A delicate balance had to be struck between the two at this project and again the writer echoes the plea for an established conservations studio at the Victoria Memorial.

Finally, some good news. The work being done at the Victoria Memorial must have struck a cord in the citizens of Calcutta because recently a publicly funded project has restored the dilapidated Town Hall. Though I hear the Government, which was stopped at the last minute from building a skyscraper on its lawns, is a bit foxed by the effort. They can't think of what to do with the building! Well, if the politicians could get over their ambivalence about British rule then how about turning it into a museum of the Raj? Nostalgic British tourists would arrive in hordes and turn it into an instant shrine. Restoring Calcutta's colonial buildings could finally put the city on the world's tourist map.

Subhadra Sen Gupta is a free lance journalist and writes books for children.

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Shahjahanabad: A City with an Identity?

Geeta Arya

SHAHJAHANABAD: A CITY OF DELHI, 1638-1857

By Shama Mitra Chenoy

Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi, 1998, pp. xi+244, Rs. 475.00

After Stephen Blake's monograph on Shahjahanabad, Shama Mitra Chenoy's book major advance in the study of the city of Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi)—the last city to be inhabited in Delhi before the establishment of colonial rule, in 1638 AD. In attempting to formulate a study of Shahjahanabad covering a time-span of almost 200 years, 1638-1857 of eventful history, she has set herself a mammoth task. This book is basically an analysis of the morphology of the city, its growth, development and functional identity. It brings together concerns and methods which at least until recently characterized some quite different types of studies on the city of Delhi.

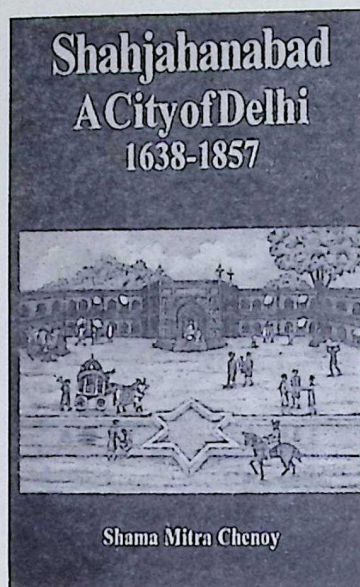
Mitra Chenoy facilitates her work by dividing the period 1638-1857 into four parts—1638-1659, 1659-1750, 1750-1803 and 1803-1857. The author begins by analysing various theoretical formulations fastened on to Indian cities, by scholars who have compared them to the West Asian, European and "Islamic Cities". Succeedingly, discerning the flaws in their methodology, Mitra Chenoy argues that these truisms fail to do justice to the structures of the urban centres and to the dynamics of their evolutionary pattern. She denounces outright the concept of an "Islamic City" as applied to the city of Delhi as fallacious.

The rest of the book reflects on the significance of the suburbs of the city, and here Mitra Chenoy appears to be in line with F. Braudel's conception of the reciprocity and mutual coexistence of the city and countryside.

What intrigues the author most is Blake's monograph, and she dwells on it in great detail and contends that his work does not give a holistic picture of its development. And his idea of a patrimonial bureaucratic empire did not translate itself into the built form of the city and its urban culture. Emphasizing the futility of comparing Shahjahanabad with cities of Europe and West Asia, she holds that these cities seem to have reflected a different process of social development.

The book then turns to a series of aspects linked with the historical background of the city of Delhi prior to Shahjahanabad and Mitra Chenoy analyses the evolution of Delhi into an urban centre between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. While discussing each city of Delhi and examining its structure of population, she postulates that Delhi as an urban centre had begun to emerge and the life of its inhabitants was not subject to the movements of the Sultan. Determined to make her case, she states that the other sections of society, apart from royalty also contributed to the usage of space and the growth of the urban culture (p. 24). A corollary to this argument is that the development and growth of Delhi was not subject to the physical presence of the Sultan, as has been accepted by many scholars. Rather, as she says, "Delhi remained an important centre of the region, within or without empires" (p. 29). For her, even when the capital was shifted from Delhi, the spate of building activity continued unabated.

The following three chapters primarily examine the spatial and functional continuities, and differences that evolved over a period of hundred years, after the city was inhabited. Thereafter historically analysing the *raison d'être* for the transfer of capital from Agra to Shahjahanabad, Mitra Chenoy asserts that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the prominence and economic viability of the city had increased. Topographical surveys of the city, however, represents the principal con-



tribution of this book, supplying as they do penetrating analyses of such topics as markets, streets, lanes, forts and public buildings, etc.

Subsequently, giving space to the cityscape, the author tries to highlight an important aspect of urban culture and traces the extent to which the economy of the Mughal Empire was sustained by the economy of the urban centres like the city of Delhi.

An interesting chapter on Shahjahanabad during 1659-1857, suggests that the city in this period witnessed a long process of urban culture marked by an increase in population which seems to have engineered some formalism in the cityscape and also reduced the scope of organized spaces considerably (p. 71). The author states that "the city from being the capital of an Empire gradually got metamorphosed into a bustling metropolis and its administrative role became merely one of the functions it performed. The city became a repository of the composite culture" (p. 71).

Mitra Chenoy struggles to show this change as reflected in many parts of the cityscape. This takes up half the book. For each phase of urban history of the city, she presents a concise yet thorough historical narrative emphasizing socio-economic realities, which is followed by a discussion of the topography, population, demographic and settlement patterns.

The rest of the book reflects on the significance of the suburbs of the city, and here Mitra Chenoy appears to be in line with F. Braudel's conception of the reciprocity and mutual coexistence of the city and countryside. Simultaneously she gives the statistical figures for the population and demographic

pattern of the city. What is of immense importance is that Mitra Chenoy is trying to asseverate that throughout its history Shahjahanabad witnessed a constantly evolving settlement pattern, where both the elite and popular traditions existed side by side.

In a tendentious section she seems to be trying to make the reasonable point that the life-style pursued by a broad cross-section of society had several common threads which bound them together, and imparted a distinctiveness to the city. Demonstrating that the city was not divided on communal or sectarian basis (p. 157) she affirms, "the city may not have been a decisive instrument of social change, but it definitely reflected the process of transitions. When the Mughal Empire began to totter, some functions of the city lost their primacy, while others assumed greater significance" (p. 193). This, however, represents something of a challenge to its earlier writings in the city of Delhi.

Hence, by focusing her analysis on the functionality of the city, the author has been able to set her findings in the comprehensive context of urban culture, and thereby draws certain convincing conclusions about the nature and structure of Shahjahanabad. Nonetheless, Mitra Chenoy ignores the consciousness of community-identity among the various sections of the society. Moreover, when the author talks about inter-regional and inter-professional mobility among the middle sections of society (p. 146), she does not reflect on the tensions created by this mobility. Such considerations would have widened the scope of an already broad study.

These gaps notwithstanding, the author in her eleven evenly balanced chapters takes care to contextualize her arguments within the broader time frame. She draws on a wide range of sources both primary and secondary, including architectural and cartographic material. The useful tables, maps and kaleidoscopic plates with which the text is illustrated augment its persuasiveness. Her work carries a pleasing book-jacket of the city prepared by S. Banerjee. On the other hand editing and proof-reading of the text has been less than careful.

Undoubtedly, Mitra Chenoy's work encourages us to rethink our notions of the structure and functionality of Shahjahanabad. This book should have broad appeal to those who are interested in the history of the city and urban culture.

Geeta Arya teaches at Bharti Mahila College, University of Delhi, Delhi.

Trauma Of Dismemberment

Lt. Gen. I.S. Gill (Retd.)

THE BETRAYAL OF EAST PAKISTAN

By Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi

Manohar Publishers, 1998, pp. 321, Rs. 450.00

Islamabad and Dhaka were separated by 2000 km of India and except for religion there was hardly anything in common between the Muslims of East and West Pakistan. Customs and traditions, diet, dress all failed to merge. The most emotive issue was language. The West Pakistanis feared Bengali domination in a federal system with 'One man—One vote', especially as 20 per cent of the population of East Pakistan was Hindu. "Unless these things are understood, it is difficult to comprehend the true picture of the 1971 war in East Pakistan which was a deliberate debacle, pre-planned and pre-arranged by President Yahya and Mr Bhutto" says the author in his Preface.

During the war with India in 1965, East Pakistan was not attacked. After the war Zulfikar Ali Bhutto stated in the National Assembly that Pakistan had been "saved by China". This caused consternation. The Bengalis had been content with the bulk of the armed forces being located in West Pakistan since the concept was that 'the battle of the East will be fought in the West'. Now they felt neglected and the author says that to a "certain extent their anxieties were not unfounded." Discontent continued to simmer. The split came to a head in the elections of 1970. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his Awami League won 160 out of 162 seats in East Pakistan while Bhutto and his Pakistan People's party secured 81 out of 138 seats in the West. Bhutto would not accept this clear mandate. In February 1971, according to the author, the Larkana conspiracy was planned, which was to quit East Pakistan and let Bhutto go his own way. If this was indeed the Bhutto game plan it was gone about in a peculiar way—by massing civilians, thus earning odium at home and abroad, and suffering a military defeat with all its consequences. On 7 March 1971 General Tikka Khan took over in East Pakistan and acted with great severity to suppress the rebellion led by Mujib. On 4 April General Niazi arrived in Dhaka to relieve Khan of military command. Tikka Khan became Governor. Niazi continued action to suppress the insurgency, which he said was completed by the

end of May. In the process millions of refugees moved into India. The East Pakistan army and police units rebelled and joined the Freedom Fighters (FF) or Mukti Bahini (MB). By the end of May about half of them had been engaged and disarmed. However Indian training camps near the border were arming and training civilian refugees and sending them back to operate inside East Pakistan. Niazi has come out with an inflated figure of these FF, which is hardly surprising. The Indian figures are almost as confusing and inaccurate. However, every Bengali was against Niazi's forces and until the outbreak of war their existence was an uneasy one at best. As the year went by and the strength and organization of the FF increased, their attacks against Border Outposts (BOPs), most often supported by the Indian Army or Border Security Force (BSF), grew. On 21st November 1971 these attacks were stepped up in several areas but especially at Boyra, West of Jessore, where tanks and aircraft were used. Pakistan lost 3 F86 fighters. Previously border incursions had been followed by withdrawal but now the attackers remained in occupation of captured areas.

In Niazi's view the war must be considered to have broken out on 21 November and not on 3 December when Pakistan started her attack in the West. Up to that time he had lost over 4000 men killed in action he says. There is considerable justification for his view, in my opinion. Niazi got his last reinforcement, of two infantry battalions, in November. This brought his strength up to three divisions and an ad hoc division—a total strength of 35 infantry battalions and the equivalent of 11 artillery regiments against the Indian force employed of approximately eight divisions comprising 83 infantry battalions and about 35 artillery regiments. (These comparisons of relative strengths discount East Pakistan Civil Armed Forces (EPCAF) and Indian FF, BSF etc.). In the air the single squadron of the Pakistan Air Force was eliminated by the fifteen Indian squadrons which could operate. The Indian Navy blockaded the Southern Coast of East Pakistan. Niazi reckoned that the Indian General

Lt-Gen. A.A.K. Niazi

the betrayal of EAST PAKISTAN



Arora had a 10:1 advantage over him. This was an exaggeration.

Basically Niazi had two tasks to carry out (although it appears that no directive was given to him in writing):

- To defend East Pakistan against external aggression; and
- to prevent any (substantial) piece of territory from falling into the hands of the rebels on which they could establish Bangladesh.

To carry out his orders he had BOPs manned by EPCAF, those BOPs covering main approaches manned by regular troops and the bulk of the regular troops concentrated in strong points and fortresses to fight a proper defensive battle. Concentration was on covering approaches to Dhaka. Niazi complains that the Pakistan government denied him the right of hot pursuit of the FF into Indian territory and that this was a part of the planned treachery.

The Pakistan Air Force opened attacks on India on the afternoon of 3rd December with weak and scattered air strikes which had no effect. The ground attacks in Chhamb and Hussainiwala met with success but in the end India had gained 5500 sq miles of West Pakistan territory. Niazi says that it was an important part of his holding role that he should not allow any Indian troops to be transferred to West Pakistan and that he succeeded in this. Most of his fortresses and strong points were still intact at the time of the cease-fire, because the Indians had by-passed them. To capture Dhaka would have cost the Indians dear, but for the blunders of the Pakistan High Command.

Indian generals who have written about this war are of the view that the

Simla Conference resulted in frittering away the military gains that resulted to us—5,500 square miles of territory and "93,000 POWs" (actually only two thirds of these were armed personnel, the rest were civilian detainees; Niazi's figures are correct). Niazi's criticism of Bhutto at the Simla Conference is mainly that Bhutto conspired with Mrs. Gandhi to release Mujib, to recognize Bangladesh and to delay the release of prisoners. He says: "On return from Simla, Bhutto's coterie had the cheek to say that Bhutto charmed Mrs Gandhi during their meeting in seclusion but from the result achieved it appears that it was Mrs. Gandhi who charmed Bhutto."

I have been unable to locate any complimentary reference to Indian generalship or planning. He scoffs at Indian 'hype' about a "lightning war", referring to it as a "snail's pace campaign". He claims that he had to get orders from the Army Chief, the Governor and the President to surrender his command before he did so. He was prepared to fight it out to the last in Dhaka but was told that he had to surrender "to save West Pakistan". General Niazi has a weakness common to almost all writers of memoirs and autobiographies: he does no wrong, makes no mistakes and makes predictions which come true one hundred per cent. Nevertheless this book is a gold mine for military historians and our military schools. It is well-written and edited, has good, clear maps and has some photographs of interest.

Note:

I was not aware until I read this book that Lt. Gen. Niazi was removed from service in 1975 and denied a pension. He, at least, appears to have been betrayed by the Pakistani leadership. Much had been going on in this part of the world in the three months immediately preceding his taking over the military leadership in East Pakistan from General Tikka Khan. The JVP insurgency had broken out in Sri Lanka and that country asked for military help from its neighbours and others; both India and Pakistan responded. An Indian airlines plane hijacked to Lahore by Kashmiris led to India cancelling overflight rights to Pakistan aircraft—flights between East and West Pakistan had to be via Sri Lanka. India held general elections in West Bengal amid political tension so acute that two infantry divisions and the Parachute Brigade were moved into the State to ensure proper conduct of the elections. This large force would have given the impression of a threat to East Pakistan.

Lt. Gen. I.S. Gill (Retd.) was Director, Military Operations, India, 1971–1973.

Sukhamoy Chakravarty: Scholar Extraordinary

Pulin B. Nayak

WRITINGS ON DEVELOPMENT

By Sukhamoy Chakravarty

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, pp. 310, Rs. 350.00

Sukhamoy Chakravarty was unquestionably one of the most gifted and significant Indian economists of the post Independence era. For most of his active professional life he held the Chair of Mathematical Economics (DSE) which he joined in 1964. Even though he was inducted into the Planning Commission in 1971 and was subsequently involved in economic policy making at the highest levels, he continued his close association with the DSE where he taught till his untimely demise in 1990 at the age of 56.

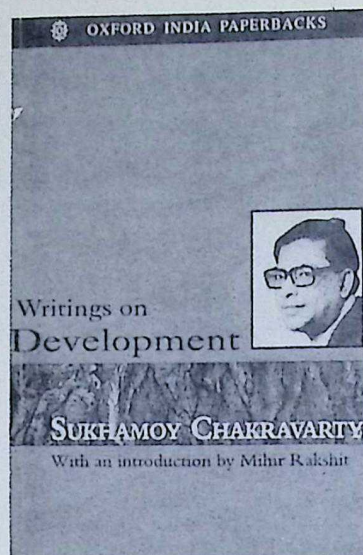
Even though in the last part of his life Sukhamoy had had serious health problems, he nevertheless had an extremely full life. Other than his Professorship at the DSE and the stint in the Planning Commission during 1971-77, he was the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council of the Prime Minister, under several different Prime Ministers. He had held visiting assignments in many leading universities, including MIT, Johns Hopkins, Erasmus and Cambridge. From 1987 he had been the Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, and he had held, in addition, numerous other major posts.

Sukhamoy was a person of deep erudition, a scholar extraordinary. Anyone who had known him or come in touch with him, whether it is the Nobel Laureate Paul Samuelson of MIT, or his exact contemporary, the distinguished Amartya Sen, now Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, or the generations of students whom he taught at the DSE, would unhesitatingly testify to his rather formidable intellectual prowess. In a festschrift piece entitled 'Homage to Chakravarty', Samuelson writes: "At any round seminar table, where Chakravarty sat was the head of the table!" In the same piece where Samuelson appreciatively describes Chakravarty as a 'Polymath' and 'Sage', he goes on: "Before Sukhamoy came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from Calcutta and Rotterdam, already he knew everything. At least ev-

everything that I might want to know. The Hegel dialectic and Hamiltonian conservation of energy. How Locke related to Erasmus." Amartya Sen fondly acknowledges Sukhamoy's 'astonishing intellectual power' and tells us: 'When we were students together at Presidency College, he not only knew more economics than all of us put together, he seemed to know more physics than the physics students, more history than the historians, and clearly, had more knowledge of the latest developments in mathematics than those specialising in that field. His company encouraged laziness, since it was always possible to eschew hard work and to ask, instead, Sukhamoy for a little lecture on the subject, which would invariably be delivered with breath-taking clarity'.

Sukhamoy's early interests were in the theory of economic growth and planning. His doctoral dissertation, completed under the first Nobel Laureate in economics—Jan Tinbergen (who shared the prize with Ragnar Frisch) in Rotterdam, Holland, was published as *The Logic of Investment Planning* (1959). Chakravarty at that time was engaged in research on the problem of optimal economic growth, first addressed by the brilliant Cambridge mathematical economist Frank Ramsey in 1928. Chakravarty was using techniques from control theory and dynamic programming, which were being pioneered by the Russian blind mathematician L. Pontryagin and the American Richard Bellman respectively in the late fifties. Through the early sixties Chakravarty came out with a number of significant contributions in the area of optimal savings and growth which were marked by a high level of mathematical rigour.

Towards the end of the sixties and certainly by the time Sukhamoy joined the Planning Commission as Member in 1971, his intellectual and professional concerns appeared to have shifted away from formal mathematical modelling and they were now centred on the problems of practical planning and



policy making. It was not that Sukhamoy had shifted his focus away from theory. Far from it, for Sukhamoy's passion for theory continued throughout. The interest was now on the conceptual and fundamental underpinnings of theory, especially as they impinged on issues of economic development, rather than the technical, and often quite mechanical, formulations of models that were typically valued in the corridors of academe. To this Sukhamoy brought his continued and consuming interest in the history of economic thought to illumine the problems at hand.

The papers in this volume constitute the mature reflections of Chakravarty, specifically in the areas of development theory and development economics. There are eleven essays in all, written during 1973-89, with the first being the oft cited 'Reflections on the 'Growth Process in the Indian Economy' which was delivered at the Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad in 1973. Barring one hitherto unpublished paper on Kalecki and development economics, all the essays in the volume have been published in journals or as monographs. The collection is introduced by a succinct piece by Mihir Rakshit entitled "Development Economics: A Synoptic View".

The paper that is chronologically the last, published in 1989, a year before Chakravarty's death, is the first paper in this volume. It is entitled 'Development Economics in Perspective'. Sukhamoy opens the paper by drawing a distinction between 'development theorizing' and 'development economics'. While the latter emerged as a distinct area of study during the post war years in the writings of Rosenstein-Rodan, Mandelbaum, Nurkse and others, the former has its lineage going

back to the founders of the subject including Sir James Steuart, Adam Smith and Friedrich List. Even though Steuart was eclipsed by the awesome stature of Adam Smith, Marx had praised Steuart for his commanding historical vision and for charting out the tasks for the statesmen of the day to speed up development. As for List (1789-1846), he operated in a milieu of nascent industrial capitalism in Germany. Whereas capitalism had already taken solid roots in England and had made Smith and Ricardo into free traders, the backward condition of Germany made List a champion of economic nationalism. List gave up an academic career for the sake of political activity and journalism. He had many admirers in the US, Germany, as well as in many 'backward countries' including India where the greatest among the first generation economists, M.G. Ranade was his acolyte. As a judge in the Bombay High Court, Ranade had enunciated an approach to Indian development that was clearly inspired by List's 'National System of Political Economy'. In this book List had formulated a theory of protection that was particularly adapted to the needs of the youthful German industry. List had rejected *laissez-faire* and had justified tariffs as educative measures which were to be used to nurse infant industries.

Among the twentieth century authors of whom Chakravarty writes appreciatively are the British economist Vera Anstey, the Rumanian Mikailo Manolesco and the Polish Michael Kalecki. Although Anstey was not a theorist as the term is understood these days, she had perfectly imbibed the spirit of Marshall's *Principles*. In her perceptive study on the *Economic Development of India* (1952) Anstey had highlighted the role of economic incentives as they were mediated through institutional arrangements, especially in agriculture. Chakravarty argues that the works of Manolesco and Kalecki were a precursor to the later theorizing by Nurkse and others.

The explosion of the literature on development economics in the forties and fifties was directly an offshoot of the Keynesian revolution. According to Chakravarty this was more in the nature of a change in intellectual outlook. It was not that Keynes had said something significant about the nature of the development problem. It was rather his successful redefinition of the agenda of the state which was first stated succinctly in his article 'The End of *Laissez Faire*' (1926) and carried to a successful completion in his 'General Theory' (1936).

In the writings on development economics during the fifties and sixties to

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which there were substantial contributions by Rosenstein-Rodan, Mandelstam, Nurkse, Scitovsky and others, much attention was focussed on the debate on 'balanced' versus 'unbalanced' growth. With hindsight one may say that this was possibly a sterile debate. Rodan had argued for the 'Big Push' since he recognized the importance of complementarities in production. This led him to argue for a much larger scale of capital transfer to China and India. The essential idea behind this was to activate the large body of the disguisedly unemployed with the influx of capital to begin a process of productive transformation of these economies. For Kalecki as well as Ragnar Nurkse, the existence of disguised unemployment itself meant an implied potential saving and Nurkse's main concern was to devise a way to mobilize this potential to further economic growth. In contrast to these models a distinct formulation was offered by W. Arthur Lewis in 1954. Lewis's model formulation was in the classical tradition where the key element was the availability of unlimited supplies of labour at a subsistence wage. Chakravarty offers a critique of the Lewis model and points out that Lewis was not at all precise as to how the subsistence sector was organized nor was he clear whether this sector could generate its own dynamic. Further, the main link between the modern and the subsistence sector was through labour transfer which, Chakravarty argues, was not analyzed with any precision. In this connection Chakravarty notes the importance of Kaldor's thesis on the need for a growing agricultural surplus to give a boost to particularly those industries enjoying increasing returns to scale. In the final analysis Chakravarty makes a case for incorporating the role of knowledge and properly formulating the role of institutions, social, political as well as economic, in fully understanding the process of development.

In a significant contribution (Chapter 2) Chakravarty makes a cogent case for a synthesis between the Keynesian position and the 'classics' for a better understanding of the constraints facing developing countries like India. The classical approach has focussed principally on real wages, technology, savings and generally on freeing the constraints on the supply side. Chakravarty however emphasizes the relevance of Keynesian economics for developing countries on grounds that wage bargains are conducted in money terms and the decisions to save and invest are not undertaken by the same economic agents. It is also the case that long term investment in less developed

countries is inhibited owing to uncertainty as well as a highly imperfect credit system. Chakravarty argues that it is important to ensure that the potential surplus is not wasted is an underutilization of resources, conspicuous consumption or socially wasteful accumulation of unproductive assets in the form of gold. All of this emphasizes the importance of appropriate demand management, and hence the need for a synthesis between the Keynesian and the classical position.

All through these essays Chakravarty makes a strong case for getting away from the exclusive preoccupation with the 'market failure' paradigm or a simple 'stages of growth' argument that was advanced by Walt Rostow. For Chakravarty it was more important to think of economics as a subject which deals with 'social provisioning of goods and services'. On the subject of social provisioning Sukhamoy was clear about according special attention to the concept of capital. In this context he appreciatively refers to the contributions of Thorstein Veblen who had carefully drawn a distinction between tangible and intangible assets. For Veblen the latter were just as important as the former and he had observed: "Without access to such a common stock of immaterial equipment no individual and no fraction of the community can make a living, much less make an advance."

Chakravarty dismisses the preoccupation with the discussion as market versus the Plan as being 'much too crude'. For him it was more important to engage in a deeper study of economic organization 'from the point of view of ensuring creativity, growth and equity'. The one major twentieth century economist who had emphasized the 'creative' aspect of the process of capitalist development was the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter and Chakravarty appears to have been progressively attracted to Schumpeter's formulations in his mature years.

Perhaps the most substantive piece in this collection is the third essay (Chapter 3) entitled "Alternative Approaches to a Theory of Economic Growth: Marx, Marshall and Schumpeter". This was delivered as the R.C. Dutt lecture on Political Economy in 1980 at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Growth theory had always been Sukhamoy's home turf, and Sukhamoy was a great admirer of both Marx as well as Schumpeter. Both these factors contribute to making this a scintillating piece with some bold and unusual formulations. Schumpeter's own estimation of Marx was not without some ambivalence. Schumpeter was dis-

missive of the Marxian labour theory of value, but he had the highest estimation for Marx's scholarship as well as his sociological insights. Schumpeter himself was something of a polymath scholar, as is evident from his magisterial, more than a thousand pages long, *A History of Economic Analysis* (1954). Schumpeter was born in 1883, the same year as Marx died, and even though he had had an aristocratic upbringing in Vienna, he was something of a rebel in his economic thinking and has often been described as the *enfant terrible* amongst his Austrian fellow economists. Schumpeter had started his economics career as a great admirer of the formal, mathematical modelling in economics and for him the greatest economist was the Frenchman Leon Walras, the father of general equilibrium theory. However as the years passed, Schumpeter became conscious of his limitations as a mathematical economist and self confessedly shifted his attention to economic history as well as history of economic analysis.

In the third essay, Sukhamoy identifies the two major contending approaches to growth theorizing as the Mill-Marshall tradition on the one hand and the Marx-Schumpeter tradition on the other. Both these approaches have their lineage from Smith and Ricardo. The modern day Solow type growth theories are placed in the Mill-Marshall tradition. This approach, particularly in its neo-classical versions is seriously impaired due to its neglect of institutional factors. Chakravarty finds favour with the Marx-Schumpeter tradition essentially because it looks at the irreversible nature of historical changes, the importance of entrepreneurial effort in raising productivity, the role of credit and the structural breaks or discontinuities in the growth process. The latter tradition is also more amenable to considering the important question of indivisibilities, embodied innovation and the process of 'creative destruction' which was emphasized by Schumpeter.

Commenting further on the fascination that Chakravarty self-avowedly had for Schumpeter, Amartya Sen writes: "To some extent Schumpeter had become a vehicle of expression of Sukhamoy's discontent with the present state of economic theory. That discontent was very strongly felt, and on more than one occasion Sukhamoy had outlined to me his plan to do an ambitious work of reconstruction of economic theory—more institutional and a great deal more historical than what we currently have." Sukhamoy's untimely death has prevented the possibility of this work.

There are two significant essays, one

on M. Kalecki's work on development economics and the other on the relevance of Marxist economics to contemporary development economics. Both of these essays question the mainstream mode of analyzing the development processes in low income countries. As early as 1938, Kalecki had cogently argued in his appreciative review of Manólesco's book that the way to develop for backward countries was not via protectionist industrialization. He had emphasized the need for land reform to overcome the institutional barriers posed by an obsolete agrarian structure and he had also seen the possibility of mobilizing the surplus inherent in the labour force characterized by disguised unemployment. The key issue for him was to ensure that wage goods posed no special bottleneck. He believed that this could be brought about by suitable institutional reforms. While Kalecki was no doctrinaire Marxist, he had imbibed enough of Marx's theory of history to locate a close relationship between the nature of production relations and the growth of productive forces. For him the main task at hand was to free agriculture in underdeveloped countries from the constraint of semi-feudal forces. Chakravarty critically examines the view due to Baran that the Third World nations would face serious obstacles to their economic and social advancement due to the contradictions arising from private property rights and the dominance of monopoly capitalism. With the serious economic crises that the East Asian countries are going through Chakravarty's plea for extending rather than abandoning the Marxian approach assumes a poignant force.

The last three essays focus on some analytical and policy issues on the Indian economy. In Chapter nine there is a discussion of the Lewis, Ricardian and Mahalanobis approaches as an understanding of the growth processes of the Indian economy. There is a discussion of the interdependence between agriculture and industry in redesigning development strategies, the need for changes in the structure of property rights required for inducing technological improvements and the need for preventing the abuse of monopoly powers. In Chapter ten there is an examination of the question as to whether a 'narrowing' home market poses a problem so far as India's growth prospects are concerned. The answer is in the affirmative, for Chakravarty rejects the notion that the 'market problem' is a relatively minor one in developing countries as opposed to mature capitalist countries. Chakravarty concludes that the factors that tend to produce

demand deficiency' in relative terms have a lot to do with a growing rigidity in the structure of prices throughout the economy, both agricultural and industrial, with an upward trend imparted through a highly permissive monetary policy and a myopic character of private investment. In the final chapter, dealing with monetary policy, a case is made for monetary targeting with feedback for preserving macro economic balance. Chakravarty cautions against adapting any simplistic formula on regulation of money supply or interest rates owing to the quality of the Indian economy in several important aspects.

There are many who have expressed the view that Sukhamoy's move to the Planning Commission in 1971 and his subsequent involvement with governmental policy-making was detrimental to his growth as a scholar and the economics profession was deprived as a result of many potential contributions from him. An exact assessment of the loss to the profession can never really be made and a discussion of this problem, by its very nature, has to be purely speculative. By the early seventies it was clear that Sukhamoy's fascination for mathematical model building had definitely declined. Even if he were to continue being a pure academic his intellectual output was no longer likely to be in the area of formal mathematical theory. It is conceivable that he might have made more substantive intellectual contributions in the areas of development theory and the history of economic thought than he actually did after he joined the government. But one can never be absolutely sure as to whether his commitments as a planner and government policy maker actually helped or hindered the process of his intellectual growth.

Sukhamoy always revelled in ideas. Till the very end he fundamentally believed that cerebral, intellectual activities could transform society and human lives. In the early years Sukhamoy had firmly believed in the applicability of mathematical reasoning. Still, towards the last decade of his life his enthusiasm for formal modelling had been shaken. Still there was never any doubt in his mind about the power of knowledge and reasoning. As Sen puts it 'it seemed to Sukhamoy now that the knowledge that was needed had to be more institutional and historical, and the reasoning that was required must be less formal and more hospitable to imprecise but important concepts and categories'.

Pulin B. Nayak is Professor of Economics at the Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University.

Negotiating Just Recompense

Gopal K. Kadekodi

BARGAINING POWER, WAGES AND EMPLOYMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR MARKETS IN INDIA

By Gaurav Datt

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 224, Rs. 295.00

It is generally difficult to combine a good theory with empiricism. This is particularly the case with the social sciences. Gaurav Datt has tried to correct this impression with his venture on analysing a very complex issue of wage determination in the rural labour markets in India.

The characteristics of rural labour markets, as studied by a large number of social scientists are: unorganized casual rural labourers, existence of minimum wage rate more as evidencing disequilibrium in the labour market, discriminating wages between male and female, high female labour inputs in agriculture, labour productivity being independent of wage structure, a variety of labour contractual systems, and finally highly seasonal employment patterns. Interested readers can have a good review of these in the book. There are evidences of real wages in rural India going up, as stated by Gaurav Datt. Can this be attributed to improved

There are evidences of real wages in rural India going up, as stated by Gaurav Datt. Can this be attributed to improved productivity or improved bargaining power among the rural labour? While most neo-classical economists argue in favour of the first, the author takes the position of the latter. It is this institutional approach to the understanding of the labour market that makes the book different.

productivity or improved bargaining power among the rural labour? While most neo-classical economists argue in favour of the first, the author takes the position of the latter. It is this institutional approach to the understanding of the labour market that makes the book different. But can increasing wage bargaining reduce the wage differential between male and female or between regions, improve the living standards or income distribution of rural labour, reduce seasonality of employment, influence the output prices etc., are the logical policy oriented questions. They are handled in the book with a theoretical model of wage bargaining and equilibrium (to be more precise, Nash equilibrium). Can the present wage structure and the manner in which wage rate and employment are determined reason out the social and economic milieu of rural India? What are the prospects of bringing in an institution of bargaining in rural labour market? Some of these issues are left out by the author. Maybe he is at them in his other works.

I always prefer to read the last chapters of such a book first, though to any serious reader, I will recommend chapters three and four as well. One does not like to propose a theory only to disapprove of it subsequently. Therefore, the review or testing of labour market models such as 'Efficiency wage theory', or 'subsistence wage theory' or supply-demand model etc., are a bit out of place here. What makes the book worth having on the shelf is the formulation of a 'wage bargaining model', imposed on a non-existent (i.e., unorganized, non-unionized) bargaining labour market in which casual labourers set the strategies as either to undercut the existing wage rate or not to undercut. The research will be complete when the author or anyone else can take up the question of bringing such a bargaining

platform in the rural settings of India. Once again, as the author has noted, the solution exists in a cooperative Nash (otherwise, it would be a typical prisoner's dilemma) equilibrium. A similar model was framed in a policy-oriented study published by the same publisher in 1980 under the title 'Participatory Development: An approach to the management of common property resources'.

With a model of profit to the farmer (hiring wage employment), labour demand and bargained wage (i.e., Nash equilibrated, with or without symmetric pay-offs), the author sets out to estimate several parameters, among which, of immediate interest are the bargaining power parameter and disagreement pay off (often also called threat pay-off). Using the primary survey data collected by ICRISAT from ten villages covering on an average forty households per village, econometric models are estimated. The bargaining power is invariably found to be highly in favour of the employer, not a surprising result. More interesting is the finding that the bargaining power is much less among the female workers, who contribute up to eighty per cent of total labour force in some villages! Therefore, it is the lack of equal bargaining power and not so much productivity differences that can explain the wage differences between the male and female workers. This is a very important finding, having policy implications. Better education for women, encouraging them to collectivize and also asking a higher differential minimum wage can improve their bargaining power. Can bargaining power explain at least the high wages in peak agricultural seasons? The author finds no evidence for this.

Neither does bargaining power seem to be relevant in understanding the regional variation in wage rates in India. But certainly, the unequal bargaining power can be responsible for the highly unequal income distribution that prevails among the rural labour class.

What I like of the author is his admitting at the end that this study has been a first step of a larger research agenda I have already pointed to many of them earlier.

Gopal K. Kadekodi is a professor at the Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi. His research interests cover themes such as income distribution, poverty, growth, energy, environment and macro-economic modelling. He is the author of several books in these research areas. He is associated with several international journals and member of a large number of international and national professional organizations.

Lessons for Urban Planners

A.G. Krishna Menon

CITIES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, ISSUES, THEORY AND POLICY

Edited by Josef Gugler

Oxford University Press, New York, 1997, pp. 396, price not stated.

Urban planning in India has not achieved its objectives. This should be obvious to anyone who lives in Indian cities, large or small. Housing shortage, chaotic transport and pollution are endemic problems. These problems along with the phenomenon of proliferating slums and uncontrolled development are the defining characteristic of our cities, not planned development. Planners invariably cite the lack of committed political will to implement plans and the paucity of financial resources as reasons for the present state of the urban environment. Of course, this is partly true, but one is also beginning to realize that the professional is as much to blame for the mess that has been created. The fact is that the urban planner is not in touch with ground realities and does not understand the dynamics of contemporary urban development.

The book being reviewed makes this clear, though not directly and not by specifically citing the Indian context. It relates issues, theory and policy on matters relating to urban development in conditions not too dissimilar which makes one realize the inadequacies of Indian practice. It is a collection of twenty-five essays largely based on the Latin American experience, and brings together a good range and depth of studies on urban development (e.g. government control in China, ethnicity in Africa, squatter settlements in Latin America).

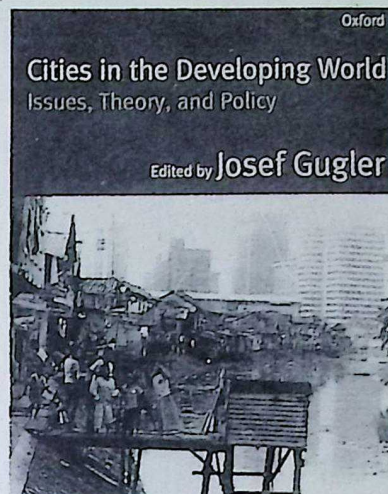
No doubt similar studies are undertaken in India, but no urban planner seeks to relate them to issues, theory and policy of urban development. Ur-

ban development policy in India does not emanate from research and rigorous analysis of issues. Policies, such as they are, derive from simplistic perceptions rooted in class biases, inappropriate theories of urban development and antiquated town planning laws. Consequently, urban planners in India have not come to terms with the implications of the dramatic shift in economic policy from one that emphasized the importance of state-directed planning to that which emphasizes the manipulation of markets to achieve social and economic goals. The emphasis on markets and economic liberalization has already had profound effect on migration and urban development during the last decade which needs to be considered while evolving policy. The only Indian case study in this volume, discusses the "Changing Migration Strategies in Deccan Maharashtra, 1885-1990". However, urban planners in India are unaware of, or do not take into account such studies in their work. Instead of fashioning policy to changing circumstances, urban development is achieved by attempting to implement a Master Plan of dubious merit through the police powers of the State. The practice of Master Planning in India is an anachronistic relic of the 1940s when planners all over the world imagined that they could direct urban development to fit an idealized pattern of land uses. As this book indicates, the rest of the world has moved away from such deterministic strategies of urban development but the planner in India continues to cling to them. Master Planning is also at

If current trends in the deterioration of conditions are to be slowed, halted, or reversed, some basic questions have to be addressed. Perhaps first is what measures should governments adopt to establish the pre-conditions for a more equitable, efficient, and citizen-directed urban development that also responds to the shortage of capital, the institutional limitations, and (for many nations) economic stagnation.

Reviewing the past 30 years, the evidence does not suggest a diminution in the role of government which for more than a decade has become the standard response. It suggests the need for a different role—more activist, more representative, and more supportive of citizen efforts. One of the first steps for governments is to inform their citizens about their plans and the real possibilities for their implementation. This might appear politically dangerous, given the scarce public resources invested in cities, and the criticisms that such announcements might provoke. But more open participatory forms of government are an essential part of addressing the fundamental problems of Third World cities. These require a frankness and honesty which have hardly characterized the actions of most governments. To elude the honest dissemination of such information is not only dangerous but it also reinforces governments' present isolation.

From *Cities In The Developing World*



variance with the intent of the recent 74th Amendment to the Constitution, because the people are not consulted in the typically top-down approach it follows.

The book also makes clear that urban planning is an interdisciplinary profession. While lip service is paid to this fact in academic institutions in India, it is seldom acknowledged in practice where it is almost exclusively an exercise in spatial planning through the instrument of the Master Plan. These exercises do not take into account the rational economic and social decisions of the people who are expected to inhabit these spaces. In fact, it may not be outlandish to state that urban planners in India generally work against the natural behavioural tendencies of the people they plan for, so failure of their plans is inevitable. Such exercises are undertaken in the naive belief that the 'planner knows best', and the tragedy of Indian urbanism is that the planner obviously does not, either about the phenomenon of urbanization or the dynamics of urban development.

Under the circumstances this book should be read by urban planners in India, because it deals with a diverse range of case studies. But I suspect that it will be overlooked because a) it does not focus on conditions in India (as in some other disciplines, urban planners too believe that conditions in India are *sui generis*), and b) it looks at the problem of urban development through the lens of associated disciplines, a process with which the Indian planner is unfamiliar. More is the pity, because it is possible to learn from cross-cultural experiences and also from the sociologists, anthropologists, architects, economists, geographers, planners, political scientists and psychologists whose contributions are included in this volume.

These essays explore two views on urbanization: the 'modernization theory' and the 'urban bias' approach.

From a modernization perspective, the process of urbanization achieves the transition from a rural to an urban society which is conducive to the transformation from 'traditional' to 'modern' society in terms of both the technology of production and the orientation of individuals and social institutions. Proponents of the urban bias thesis however, counter that in this process policy-makers tend to favour urban areas over rural by disproportionately allocating resources to the cities, especially the capital cities, with results that are both inequitable and inefficient.

In India the policy on urbanization of the last fifty years has generally been Janus-like, because it has attempted to modernize and urbanize with a guilt-ridden anti-urban bias. Predictably, this has led to neither effective urban development nor rural regeneration. Charles Correa attempted to send a clear 'urban bias' signal through the National Urbanization Commission Report (1988), but the profession was typically ambivalent, and allowed the message to sink without a trace. The sad fact is that today, fifty years after Independence, there is no rational urbanization or housing policy in the country.

These policies must evolve through dialogue and debate involving the multifarious dimensions of urban development. This does not take place in academic institutions and certainly not in practice. This book and a companion volume entitled *The Urban Transformation of the Developing World* (not being reviewed in this article) taken together are good models for engaging in such a dialogue in India. The profession needs to shed its elitist and anachronistic vision, and plan with the people and not for (which in practice, translates to against) the people. As a contributor to this collection states: "Third World city problems in the last decade of the twentieth century cannot be tackled with weak, ineffective, and unrepresentative forms of urban government. They cannot be tackled with a legal system and an institutional structure little changed from late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century precedents, most of which were imported from alien cultures and originally applied under very different economic circumstances and political structures" (p. 271). There are many such lessons for Indian urban planners in this book.

A.G. Krishna Menon is an architect-urban planner with a practice in Delhi since 1972 which has included several architectural heritage conservation projects. Has simultaneously been teaching and is currently the Director of TVB School of Habitat Studies, New Delhi.



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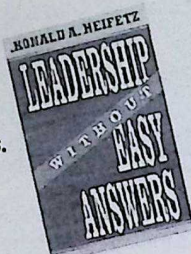
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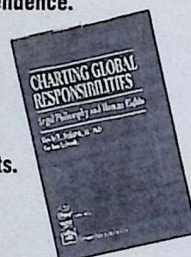
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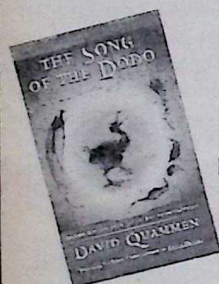


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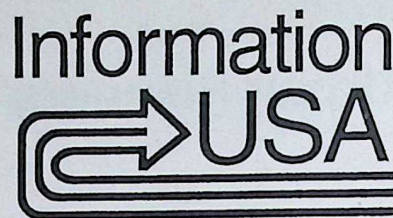
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Letter from London

Stephen Moss

One of the boom areas in UK publishing is science books. But these are not technical tomes aimed at a scientifically sophisticated audience; rather they are popular science books aimed at a general audience. This autumn's catalogues are bulging with them: *The Fifth Miracle* by Paul Davies, *Six Not-So-Easy Pieces* by Richard Feynman, *The Red Hourglass* by Gordon Grice, *Unweaving the Rainbow* by Richard Dawkins, *Consilience* by Edward O Wilson, *Galileo's Daughter* by Dava Sobel, and on and on. Science is, to use the marketer's demotic, sexy.

I was a judge for this year's Rhone-Poulenc Science Book awards, and at the recent prize-giving ceremony at London's Science Museum, biologist and author Lewis Wolpert contrasted the bumper crop of titles under consideration in 1998 with the situation when he judged the inaugural awards ten years ago. The books were fewer in number then, less lavishly produced and more circumscribed in ambition. The winner in 1988, appropriately enough, was *Living with Risk*, which was produced by the British Medical Association. The author appears to have been anonymous.

Things are rather different now. More than 100 books were entered for the prize



(*Guns, Germs and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years*); and authors are certainly not anonymous. Indeed, they are superstars: articulate, accessible, media-friendly and able to command huge advances. Risk is no longer a factor for these big-name writers.

Diamond's was not the only book to demonstrate vaulting ambition. Richard Fortey was shortlisted for *Life: An Unauthorized Biography*, which aimed to encapsulate four billion years of pre-human life on earth. David Deutsch offered *The Fabric of Reality*, which aimed to divine the "theory of everything", to offer a deep scientific logic as an alternative to God. Among titles that did not make the cut were *The Life of the Cosmos*; *Time, Science and Philosophy*; and *The Whole Shebang*. These were not, you felt, books with a limited canvas.

By a happy coincidence, when the first science book prize was being awarded to the BMA ten years ago, another science title was appearing. Indeed, it has just reappeared in an edition to mark its tenth anniversary. The book was Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (which, oddly, failed to win the 1989 prize). The

this year; the winning title, by Jared Diamond, was beautifully produced (courtesy of Jonathan Cape); the subject was anything but circumscribed

big bang had arrived in science publishing. The book sold in its millions, Hawking became a household name, and publishers set out in pursuit of new worlds.

The result, ten years later, is a group of brand-name scientists, almost all called Steve or Stephen (Pinker, Rose, Jones, Jay Gould, Hawking himself, plus odd man out Richard Dawkins), and a slew of "big idea" books dealing with reality, consciousness, the birth of the cosmos and the origins of life. Science has become the new theology—read this book and you will understand, it has "the answer"—and the Steves are both showmen and shamen who will entertain and instruct in equal measure.

They are great communicators, they write well, their books are fascinating, the story of life is a great one, so is there a problem? No, unless science books become so driven by the need to encapsulate the whole shebang that they lose the excitement of the detail, the small steps that make the larger picture possible. Had Einstein been alive today, you cannot help feeling that he would have had a tough US agent and, rather than writing his ground-breaking paper "On a Heuristic Point of View Concerning the Production and Transformation of Light", would have got a mega advance for God Doesn't Gamble.

Scientific popularizers are pursuing a synthesis, which may be an admirable objective, but their books should not be synthetic. Publishers should perhaps encourage scientists to write in more detail about their work, to attempt to capture the excitement and frustration of their quest for understanding. *Longitude* and

Fermat's Last Theorem, both books by journalists, demonstrate that the miniature—the quest to solve a particular problem—can be as effective as the "life, the universe and everything" approach.

There is, as novelist Ian McEwan, who chaired the Rhone-Poulenc judges, said at the awards dinner, a far greater popular engagement with science than in the past. The pictures of the moon shots in the 1960s captivated the public (is it a coincidence that most of today's great science communicators would have grown up with Apollo?); "Star Trek", "Star Wars" and the boom in sci-fi tapped the growing interest in crossing final frontiers; and the far from brave new worlds summoned up by Aids, mad cow disease and cloning have forced the public to confront science. As McEwan said, the old, debilitating division into two cultures no longer holds—we are all scientists now.

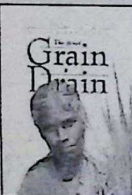
The appetite for scientific books that pose big questions and the huge sales of fantasy writers such as Terry Pratchett and Iain M. Banks can perhaps be traced to the same source—the attraction of enclosed worlds with their own codes. The challenge for the superstars who dominate the world of science writing is to tap into that popular fascination with science fiction and the huge, mind-expanding growth in Internet use (increasingly we will inhabit this virtual world as much as our physical world) without losing perspective, without offering answers where none really exist.

Stephen Moss is literary editor of the Guardian. A version of this article appeared in the U.K. in The Bookseller.

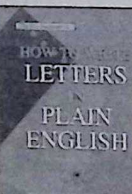
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Resurrecting a Lost Text

Meenakshi Mukherjee

SAGUNA: THE FIRST AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL IN ENGLISH BY AN INDIAN WOMAN. KRUPABAI SATTHIANADHAN

Edited by Chandani Lokugé

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 182, Rs. 425.00

"I had chafed under the restraints and the ties which formed the common lot of women, and I longed for an opportunity to show that a woman is in no way inferior to a man. How hard it seemed to my mind that marriage should be the goal of women's ambition and that she should spend her days in the light trifles of home life, live to dress, to look pretty, and never know the joy of independence and intellectual work."

The passage above might well have been an extract from Jane Eyre—one of the silent screams of rebellion by the heroine which have been foregrounded in most recent readings of the novel, turning what was once considered a prototype of a Mills and Boon romance into an early feminist text.

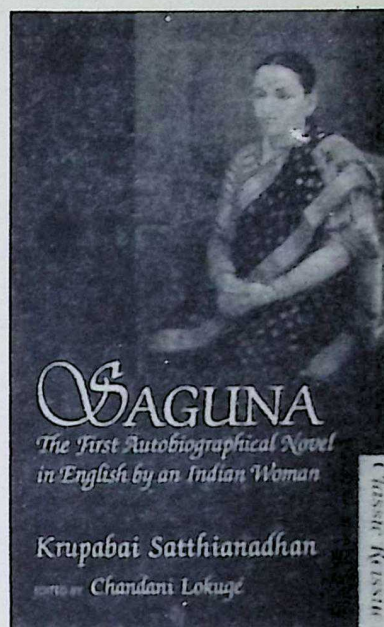
As it happens, the lines are actually from a novel titled *Saguna*, written by an Indian woman in the nineteenth century, published in Madras more than a hundred years ago. The author was much applauded in the prefatory pages of the original volume not for her radical individualism, but for exactly the opposite reasons—her 'modest, retiring, sensitive and gentle' nature and Christian piety. The name of Krupa Satthianadhan (1862–1894) is not quite unknown to those interested in Indian Writing in English, because her two books—*Kamala* (1894) and *Saguna* (1895) are listed in all the literary histories of the subject, but copies of the novels

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were difficult to trace, hence hardly any critic could undertake a detailed study of the texts (two recent exceptions being Shubhendu Mund and Jasbir Jain). Oxford University Press Delhi, has to be commended for reprinting this unusual and rare book in a very attractive edition with a Ravi Varma painting on the cover in rich shades of brown and russet. (Incidentally, part of the same painting was used by Penguin India for the cover of Shashi Deshpande's *A Matter of Time* in 1996).

Many years ago while doing my doctoral dissertation on Indian Novels in English I abandoned the search for these early texts to focus on a later period because the libraries I then had access to did not have them. I must confess, the drab documentary subtitles of Satthianadhan's novels—*Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* and *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* did not encourage me to actively continue the search for these books in subsequent years. My interest in Krupa Satthianadhan was rekindled after reading an extract from *Saguna* in the first volume of *Women Writing in India* (1990) by Susie Tharu and K. Lalita (for some reason they spell the author's name slightly differently—without the 'h's). The witty and ironic chapter they selected brought the author alive, but did not quite prepare me for the intensity, range and fascinating contradictions of her two novels which took me by surprise when I finally got to read them a couple of years ago from copies made at the British Museum Library.

The present edition of *Saguna* comes under the 'Classic Reissue' imprint, a new series from O.U.P. which hopefully will also bring out the other novel by Satthianadhan so that a total assess-



ment of the author can be made. The editor Chandani Lokugé, a Sri Lankan research scholar now working in Australia, has changed the subtitle of the novel to suit the taste of our times, highlighting the woman's autobiography rather than the Christianity angle. The editing is done meticulously. The text is preceded by a brief biography of the author, a chronology of the events of her life and a 16-page Introduction, and followed by Explanatory Notes and a Bibliography—satisfying the expectations of a well-edited text so completely, that occasional lapses (e.g., 'Narayana' explained as 'God Siva' in note 39, *Gitagovinda* described as 'pastoral drama' in note 51, Maharashtra spelt consistently as Maharashtra etc.) seem surprising. Also, at a time when almost all contemporary Indian writers in English have done away with glossaries, the editor's zeal for annotating common words like sari, brahmin, Vedas, mem sahib, salaam, Rama or Krishna strikes one as a bit excessive. She recounts the story of *Ramayana* ("the first national epic of India, the *Ramayana* is unique in the cultural history of the Deccan") finding it necessary to invoke the authority of Sudhir Kakar to tell the reader that Sita embodies the ideal of wifehood in Hindu culture.

In the original edition, published in the eighteen nineties by Srinivasa Varadachari in Madras, both the novels *Kamala* and *Saguna* were preceded by lengthy Forewords, Prefaces and Introductions by various Englishwomen—Mrs. Grigg, Mrs. Benson etc.—whoever they be (possibly wives of the District Collector and the Director Public Instructions)—who certified to the fine quality of Satthianadhan's English and praised the way "she has

The novel contains a long flashback about her parents' conversion to Christianity which would be of interest to readers today—presenting as it does the subjectivity of the father who chose Christianity out of a spirit of metaphysical inquiry, and the unwilling mother on whom it was imposed. The only other description I have come across of a similar predicament for a woman is in Lakshmibai Tilak's Marathi autobiography *Smruti Chitre*.

interpreted her countrywomen to us as no writer has done before." Extracts of reviews of the following variety were generously appended to the texts: "As we read, we fancy it is some English lady who has written the book, so charming it is to us." (*Malabar and Travancore Spectator*). The physical get-up of the two volumes—the text sandwiched between the hagiography of the pious author, informing us *who* she is, and the reviews telling us *how* to read her novels, indicate a process of appropriation that needed to be countered, and which Chandani Lokugé has attempted to do in her Introduction by bringing in the contexts of Colonialism, Feminism and Nationalism.

The patronizing verbiage that framed the earlier edition—of the colonial as well as the missionary variety—(one praising her skill in the English language, and the other extolling her faith in Christianity) obscured the fact that these two novels were perhaps the first two female *Bildungsroman* written in our subcontinent, recording the joys, sorrows, doubts, introspections of two growing girls. *Saguna* like Krupabai was the thirteenth child of Brahmin parents who were converted to Christianity before her birth.

Like the author, she too grew up near Nasik nourished by the rugged landscape and craggy hills where the river Godavari originates. She was attached to books and despite varying degrees of ridicule for what was considered an unnatural inclination for a girl, managed eventually to receive formal schooling and even get admission in a medical college in Madras, as did the author. Her frail health prevented her from completing her studies, but she married a man who would share her life on an equal basis. The novel

ends here, but the author lived on for fifteen more years, travelling with her husband wherever his job took him—Rajahmundry, Kumbakonam, Ootacamund and Madras. All through this time she regularly wrote for different journals and completed two novels before she died at Coonoor at the age of thirty-two.

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There is an implicit debate in *Saguna* about the relationship between Christianity and Indian nationalism. When Saguna's father Harichandra wanted to become a Christian, the arguments put forward to dissuade him were not all religious in nature. "One objection to the religion of Christ was that it was foreign, the religion of the conquerors, therefore it was very unpatriotic for an orthodox Hindu to exchange it for his own faith." Harichandra of course was proof against this argument: "Patriotism that sacrificed truth to blind sentiments was, he said, no true patriotism."

Indeed there is no one more patriotic in the novel than the good Christian Saguna who upbraids a fashionable foreign-returned young man for talking about England as 'home', and finds it absurd that her friend, a girl who has read too many English novels should confuse her Indian reality with the England of fiction. This girl who referred to her parents as 'pa' and 'ma' to impress Saguna, "explained with an air of importance for my benefit" how young ladies wearing "long trains" and not short skirts "are taken into society". To this, Saguna's wry comment is:

"Like many a novel-reading girl, she lived in a world of her own making and enjoyed it. She knew that the

native Christian community was very small, and that there was no society to speak of, neither short skirts nor long skirts. Her mother wore a sari."

The editor Lokugé is very keen to read *Saguna* as the pioneering text in what she calls the Indian 'New Woman Novel Tradition' in English. It seems a partial way of reading the book apart from the fact that in order to talk about a tradition one has to take into consideration more than one writer. It would be difficult to name even one other Indian English woman writer in the next half-century who would qualify to belong to this category. There were writers who did seek "greater equality between men and women", and some were Krupabai's contemporaries and predecessors (Swarnakumari Debi for example or Pandita Ramabai Saraswati) but they wrote in the Indian languages, and fall outside Chandani Lokugé's area of interest. What makes Sathianadhan's novel fascinating to us in India today is not the 'New Woman' quality that would make it comparable to the late Victorian British women's fiction, but the author's ambivalence towards colonial modernity and pre-colonial heritage, her faith in Christianity with its message of equality and love and impatience with its actual practice riddled with inequality and unstated racism.

The editor's 'Eng. Lit' approach emphasizes the influence of the British romantic poets on Krupabai rather than situate her in the contemporary Indian contexts of social reform, religious rethinking and consolidation of a newly evolved genre called the novel. Through mandatory references to post-colonialism (of the Australian variety, where Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin insist that post-colonialism begins with the advent of colonialism), Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and Abdul Jan Mohammod's 'Manichean Allegory' Chandani Lokugé attempts bravely to re-instate a forgotten Indian writer in the global academic arena by using the currently acceptable idiom of critical discourse. We are grateful to the editor for resurrecting a virtually lost text, which, now that it is available, will become open to other readings as well. One hopes that there will be a paperback edition soon, because at the present price of Rs. 2.30 per page, there is little chance of the book being prescribed for university courses on Indian Writing in English—which could be a potentially large market.

Meenakshi Mukherjee, former Professor of literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi is currently Fellow, K.K. Birla Foundation and lives in Hyderabad.

Identity, Icons and Constructions of the Self

Malavika Karlekar

THE FRAIL HERO AND VIRILE HISTORY: GENDER AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE IN COLONIAL BENGAL

By Indira Chowdhury

Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 193, Rs. 395.00

An encounter between intellectuals and institutions is rarely one-sided and the outcome is often a re-thinking on identities, values and ways of life. As the colonial presence led to considerable collective introspection among the educated upper caste middle classes not only on roles and relationships but also on how the other perceived them. Identity, icons and constructions of the self continue to be a major preoccupation of students of the colonial period.

Those directly affected by colonial rule and its stereotypes were a small per cent of the population; at the same time, in one way or another, urbanization, the development of Calcutta, changing land relations, new jobs and western education affected a larger urban as well as rural population. By and large, it was the upper caste Bengali Hindu male who was much more in direct contact with the East India Company, and later the Empire, their distinctive administrative and logistic manoeuvres and way of life than the lower castes. Growth of professions, city-based occupations and changes in land ownership patterns were a result of the dynamic interaction between imperial interventions and the individual urge to reach out for emerging opportunities; in addition, the new system of education provided much of the intellectual basis for the development of a

In her well-argued book, Indira Chowdhury sets out to look at some of these "multiple icons of identity" which evolved around the dominant stereotype of the effeminate Bengali: hence her provocative title which interrogates the notion of frailty by juxtaposing other identities.

THE FRAIL HERO AND VIRILE HISTORY



INDIRA CHOWDHURY

Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal

certain way of looking at the world. By the early decades of the nineteenth century the female body and feminine sexuality increasingly became the site for a mode of regulation, often backed by legislative provisions, the ideal being monogamous marriage with a girl old enough to consent. The frail hero was nurtured in a *weltanschauung* of intellectual and social change.

Towards the end of the century, nationalism preoccupied an elite which had self-consciously been involved in social reform, and particularly measures to improve the status of its women and thus indirectly influence self-images as well as colonial perceptions of a subject people as reactionary and weak. In choosing to focus on "the dominant typologies of self-construction and their continual reorganization within the nationalist discourse of nineteenth-century Bengal", Chowdhury draws attention to the need to fracture the bounds of a single dominant myth. In the process of icon-making, masculinity and femininity naturally become dominant motifs; the heroic woman

Whether it is through the writings of the prolific Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt's recovery of Shivaji and Prithviraj Chauhan or a re-telling of Sabitri's fortitude and determination, the literate Bengali, argues Chowdhury, was steadfastly committed to a countering of the frail hero myth. Icons of the motherland and motherhood became very important, albeit in rather unusual ways.

often acts as a foil to the frail hero, the nation is Bharat Mata and as resistance to sati, child marriage and polygamy grow, gender establishes itself firmly in public discourse. Using indigenous forms such as the Hindu Mela and the re-writing of legends and tales of valour, the past and tradition are invoked as an insurance against the oppressive present. The Hindu Mela which was started by the family of Rabindranath Tagore had a section on physical education and indigenous wrestling, and in 1879, Pandita Ramabai lectured on the need for religious instruction for Hindu girls while drawing attention to the freedom of the Aryan woman.

Whether it is through the writings of the prolific Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Romesh Chunder Dutt's recovery of Shivaji and Prithviraj Chauhan or a re-telling of Sabitri's fortitude and determination, the literate Bengali, argues Chowdhury, was steadfastly committed to a countering of the frail hero myth. Icons of the motherland and motherhood became very important, albeit in rather unusual ways. In an interesting analysis of the Bengali response to Queen Victoria, Chowdhury argues that in looking for the exemplary mother-image, "Victoria was . . . transformed into a close kin of the nineteenth-century Bengali *bhadramahila*" whose education and demeanour were of great concern to the reformers. At the same time one misses accounts of the many hagiographic responses of the Queen Empress: surely the paradoxes of her represented in part the paradoxes of the colonized mind in conflict.

That "European obsession with physicality that had diagnosed the men of Bengal as effeminate" (p. 113) was countered most effectively through the enlightened *sannyasi*—exemplified by Swami Vivekananda—is dealt with by

Chowdhury at length. The moral and the physical meet in the figure of the man whose eloquent propagation of ascetic masculinity was matched by his sartorial elegance and personal style. Viewing dominance of the colonial rulers primarily in terms of their military prowess, Vivekananda invokes the spiritual power of the colonized, based on the principles of conservation, preservation and accumulation. For the *karma yogi* in the colonial context, action was liberation in a metaphysical sense. Soon enough, however, the challenge came in the form of the partition of Bengal viewed as an assault on what Chowdhury calls "*bhadralok* masculinity" as the lessons of asceticism and Vivekananda's redesigned masculinity had to be assimilated and mastered by the sons in order to free their motherland" (p. 156). The Swadeshi movement stressed the non-attachment to worldly ties and a form of womanhood which stressed sacrifice for the Motherland—a theme to be picked up in the years to come by the Gandhian movement.

Indira Chowdhury concludes with a rather too brief discussion of the interplay between masculinity and femininity and the construction of feminine ideals where women's experience was ignored, objectified in stereotypes, foils to the frail hero: "Women were thus constructed as embodying ideals to be emulated rather than 'equal' participants who fashioned their own identities" (p. 160). In large part the author is right in stressing that women's agency in the public sphere was largely absent; at the same time, the world view of the *bhadralok* and its search for

As the frail hero, the effeminate Bengali as well as the heroic woman were in turn going through a re-definition of roles within the home, Indira Chowdhury's informed account of public articulations would have benefitted from a brief discussion of the private realm where reigning patriarchal discourses were being interrogated by women and the younger generation. For the *bhadramahila* too was an icon used in defence against those who saw the frail hero ossified in an obscurantist past, and not as a part of a virile history and a changing present.

a new paradigm had its material basis in changes in existing land relations, the emergence of the market and of urban spaces as well as the spread of education and literacy. Such changes in material existence could only be sustained by a family structure and network of relationships oriented to the newly emergent construct of public spaces. The urban, nuclear family evolved with the office-going husband, the wife who now had to combine new roles with that of the traditional *grihini* (housewife), the school-going son and servants who were employed for a wage rather than retained as a part of the *jajmani* (patron-client) relations of the *zamindari* system. Thus, while models of "idolized feminism" were useful ballasts in the undeclared war of contending stereotypes, it is not as though the newly-educated women—the *bhadramahilas*—were caught in a time warp of mythico-religious role models: after all, Sarala Debi Chaudhurani who organized *akharas*, Kadambini Ganguly who became one of the two first women doctors of the British Empire in 1886, Rassundari Debi, Keshub Chunder Sen's mother Sharadasundari Debi and many others were early critics of a confining femininity. Chowdhury writes of Sarala Debi's role—though almost in

passing; women may not have been participants in the arena of public discourse, but a number questioned their stereotypification through discussions and arguments in newspapers, journal columns as well as autobiographies. Changing domestic arrangements, the emergent nuclear family and spread of women's education and literacy empowered an elite cohort of women to engage in a questioning of stereotypes created by both the colonizers as well as their own menfolk. As the frail hero, the effeminate Bengali as well as the heroic woman were in turn going through a re-definition of roles within the home. Indira Chowdhury's informed account of public articulations would have benefited from a brief discussion of the private realm where reigning patriarchal discourses were being interrogated by women and the younger generation. For the *bhadramahila* too was an icon used in defence against those who saw the frail hero ossified in an obscurantist past, and not as a part of a virile history and a changing present.

Malavika Karlekar is editor, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi.

Erasing Silences

Malini Sood

SECLUDED SCHOLARS: WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND MUSLIM SOCIAL REFORM IN COLONIAL INDIA

By Gail Minault

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, Index, bibliography, pp. 359, Rs. 575.00

When Minault first set out to study the history of women's education among Indian Muslims, she met with a degree of incredulity for undertaking such an apparently quixotic project. "Oh, really, was there any?" a British friend asked. But a second, more fundamental, stumbling block to the study of women's education and social reform among Indian Muslims was the conventional historiography which regarded social reform in colonial India as an almost exclusively Hindu endeavour. A third problem was the removal from historical scrutiny both literally as well as figuratively of the Muslim women, not just behind the *purdah*, but also in the historical record.

"If there is such a thing as a comparative degree of invisibility, Muslim women are even more invisible to history than are other Indian women," observes Minault (p.2).

In her introduction, "Portraying Invisibility: Strategies, Sources, Generations," Minault discusses four narrative strategies to study the problem of the invisibility of women in the historical record in general, and the erasure and silencing of Muslim women in South Asian history, in particular.

The first strategy involves studying women as an issue in the colonial encounter of cultures in 19th century India. Minault rightly emphasizes the fact that the Muslims in India have never been a monolithic, undifferentiated



community, nor did they exhibit uniform responses to the imposition of British rule. She also criticizes the popular model of colonial encounter that posits "Western impact and Indian response" in matters of social and cultural change whereby western culture is regarded as the agent of change and Indian tradition is regarded as the inert matter which is acted upon. In emphasizing the importance of the historical continuities between pre- and post-British Indian societies, Minault describes the colonial encounter as an interactive process of "negotiation, translation and naturalization" between the colonial and the indigenous which then resulted in change in the social and cultural as well as in the political realms (p. 4).

The second discursive strategy involves studying women as the symbols of male reformers' attitudes and ambitions, the repository of their hopes and fears. For male reformers, both Muslim and Hindu, the women became symbolic of all that was backward and weak in their respective cultures, religions and societies, as well as all that was worth preserving. This strategy serves the useful purpose of relating changes in the public, 'outer' sphere to changes in the private, domestic or 'inner' sphere. As Partha Chatterjee points out in the context of the Bengali *bhadralok*, the 'private' domain of religious and social reform became a 'public' domain of contestation among reformers well before the overtly public domain of politics was open to Indian men.

As the elite Muslim *ashraf* (singular *sharif*) families, which had constituted the erstwhile Mughal service gentry, grappled with the loss of political power after 1857 and faced increasing economic and social competition during

this period of rapid change, the Muslim women came to personify the plight of the community at large. The debate over women's education necessarily impinged on the larger issues of social reform and the definition of community boundaries, both for Hindus and Muslims. In discussing in print the meaning of an Indian Muslim identity in north India in the second half of the 19th century, the male Muslim reformers articulated their concerns regarding the preservation or revival of Muslim culture, as well as with the need to transform it to meet the demands of modernity. In the process, they established certain parameters of normative behaviour for their community, including those for their women.

The third narrative strategy involves studying women as the objects of men's reformist impulses and as the beneficiaries of the men's 'civilizing' activities: as students in schools; as readers of 'improving', didactic, prescriptive literature; as subscribers to magazines designed to disseminate new knowledge. This strategy yields the largest number of primary sources for historical research, thanks to the rapid expansion of the print media in this period. The articulate, educated men who led the movement for Muslim women's education left behind a rich corpus of written material which provide valuable insights into both the process of cultural continuity and the colonial encounter with the West.

However, Minault notes that these three narrative strategies offer only partial views of Muslim women, as seen through the eyes and in the writings of male reformers as either an issue, or a symbol, or an object. A fourth strategy is needed to balance this passive and somewhat abstract figure of the Muslim female. To overcome the usual stumbling block posed by the paucity or the absence of written records regarding Muslim women, Minault has read creatively between the lines of men's accounts, examined women's oral accounts using techniques derived from cultural anthropology, and analyzed women's writings when these began to appear in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a growing number of Urdu magazines for women. Magazines proved to be the richest source of historical inquiry, while biographical and autobiographical writings, short stories, and novels by women were equally useful.

Minault divides the history of Muslim women's education and social reform in colonial India into the history of three generations. The first generation were the men born before 1857, educated in the Islamic religious and literary traditions in Arabic, Persian

and Urdu (but not yet in English). These men delineated the emerging Muslim men's image of the ideal Muslim woman, discussed Muslim family life, customs and rituals, and propagated educational curricula and pedagogical principles most suitable for the women in purdah. This older generation of male reformers included Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi (1833-1912) and Khwaja Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914).

Both Sir Sayyid and Nazir Ahmad regarded the *zenana* (women's quarters) as a place of isolation, backwardness, corrupt customs, superstition, and ignorance. On the other hand, both men also regarded an educated Muslim woman as a potential source of ethical guidance, discipline, and revitalized faith for her whole family. They did not regard purdah as a barrier to women's learning since, as Sir Sayyid argued citing the example of his beloved mother, the world could be brought into the *zenana* via education; the educated women could then exercise a wholesome influence on their families, particularly on their sons.

We have two notable examples of this didactic, 'improving' literature for women. The first is Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi's first novel *Mirat ul-'Arus* (The Bride's Mirror) which became a huge success when it appeared in 1869. Nazir Ahmad wrote his cautionary tale for his daughters when he discovered a lack of suitable literature for the moral instruction of women, a reason frequently cited by reformers for taking up the pen. He employed a narrative plot which was widely imitated by later male writers of women's literature: the contrast between the good, educated woman and the bad, illiterate woman, here two sisters, Akbari and Asghari, from a respectable Delhi family. Akbari, the elder, is uneducated, lazy, quarrelsome, superstitious, and credulous. Asghari, the younger, is the ideal modern Muslim woman: home-educated, purdah-observing, wise, responsible, tactful, loyal, charitable, pious, and economically resourceful. She never transgresses the rules of purdah, yet skillfully manages the affairs of both her family and the outside world.

Another notable fictional representation of the Muslim female ideal was Zubaida Khatun, the heroine of Hali's work, *Majalis un-Nissa* (Assemblies of Women). The education of Zubaida Khatun was designed to overcome the lack of decorum and self control of the *zenana* women:

When several women get together, they sit around and start complaining. Some complain about their mothers-in-law, others complain

about their sisters-in-law. Some pour vitriol on their daughters-in-law; others recall their grievances against their husbands. Some find fault with X's marriage or joke about the amount of Y's dowry or cast aspersions on Z's ancestry. If anyone disagrees with anything another says, they quarrel. . . Such women abuse and wound each other. They say tasteless things to their husbands. They curse their children for no reason. They grumble and argue with their servants. . . (p. 45)

The educated Muslim lady would disregard the superstitions and folk beliefs so popular among the uneducated, credulous women:

If two pieces of metal strike together, it is inauspicious. . . If you stand a foot up against the wall with its legs facing out, it will bring bad luck. . . If a broom touches your body, you will become greedy for food. . . Whenever you give children milk, curd or rice (white things) to eat, give them a slight taste of ashes as well, or the evil eye will affect them. . . If the veil of a woman whose child has died touches someone, her child will become ill, unless she cuts off the corner of the veil and burns it. If you go to someone's house for a visit, don't return on the third day. Don't go visiting on a Wednesday. . . the third, thirteenth, and twenty-third and the eighth, eighteenth, and twenty-eighth are unlucky, so don't take up new tasks on those dates (p. 47).

Both *Mirat ul-'Arus* and *Majalis un-Nissa* (1874) gained official recognition from the government, winning cash prizes and being adopted as textbooks in girls' schools. It is interesting to note that *Majalis* represents the congruence of mid-Victorian notions of social propriety and the *adab* code of ethical behaviour so beloved of *sharif* society and reformist Islam. Both ideologies advocated emotional restraint, verbal etiquette, proper deportment, and education both practical and literary. (Queen Victoria was frequently upheld as a model wife, mother, and ruler by the Muslim writers). This is not altogether surprising considering that both societies were undergoing similar processes of embourgeoisment, notes Minault.

The second generation was the post-1857 "generation of reform," the ideologues, publicists, pedagogues and activists whose education was a mixture of Islamic and western elements. They became skilled religious and social polemists, founded associations and

schools for the education of women, and published didactic literature and women's magazines for the edification of women in purdah during the period 1890s and 1910s.

Among the outstanding men of the "generation of reform" were Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1864-1943), a product of the Deoband madrasa, author of the incredibly popular *Bihishti Zewar* (The Ornaments of Paradise 1905). A veritable encyclopedia of the religious and educational curriculum, a copy of which became part of every bride's dowry, designed to equip her to face any situation in her new life as a wife, mother, and household manager.

Other notable individuals of the "generation of reform" were Sayyid Mumtaz Ali (1860-1935) of Lahore and his wife Muhammadi Begam; Shaikh Abdullah of Aligarh and his wife Wahid Jahan Begam; Sayyid Ahmad Dehlavi (1846-1918); Basiruddin Ahmad (1888-1927), son of Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi; and Rashidul Khairi of Delhi, nephew of Nazir Ahmad Dehlavi.

The issue of Muslim women's educational reform drew widely on both secular and religious positions, tradition and innovation. On the one hand, the reform programme drew equally upon Islamic intellectual traditions, such as the Sufi discourse on moral decline and renewal taught by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah, the teachings of the Deoband madrasa, as well as the *sharif* critique of the decadent nawabi lifestyle. The reformers also employed Muslim patterns of religious controversy (*munazara*), and traditional networks of relationship and patronage. The leading Muslim families formed networks of patronage involving both private donations and largesse from such princely houses as Bhopal, Hyderabad and Rampur.

On the other hand, even the most conservative did not hesitate to adopt western organizational forms and modern printing technology; these included schools as corporate entities, *anjumans* (associations) to advance social and educational goals, polemical tracts and pamphlets, scholarly journals and newspapers. Similarly, the production of a 'suitable' literature for the uplift of women, such as didactic novels, short stories, verse, compendia and women's magazines containing useful information on such topics as household management, child care and nutrition, also drew on a mixture of western and traditional literary forms such as the Arabo-Persian *dastan*. From the West came the novel of manners, the "angel in the house" genre, the "Prince in the Mirror" genre, and mid-Victorian pedagogical self-help maxims along the lines of Samuel

Smiles' adages (that the home was the most influential source of civilization, that a good mother was worth a thousand teachers). The prose innovations directed at women readers in purdah included simple, straightforward Urdu (complete with a glossary of the more unfamiliar terms) and *begamati zuban*, the earthy colloquial Urdu dialect spoken by the women of Delhi but disdained by the upper class, educated *sharif* families.

Minault focuses on the men of the middle generation or the "generation of reform" who played a pivotal role in responding to the changed patterns of patronage and employment under British rule, in defining Muslim society and culture in the context of late 19th and early 20th century India, and in delineating norms and roles for women in the emerging Indian Muslim middle class. In this "work of collective biography," Minault skillfully weaves in the ideas, motivations and reformist impulses of certain Muslim men while discussing the influence of their family background, education, religious faith, kin networks, and marriages. Her primary focus is on the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India, as well as on regional developments in Hyderabad, Bombay, Bhopal and Calcutta. The pioneers in women's education, such as the Abdullahs in Aligarh, Sayyid Karamat Husain in Lucknow, and Rokeya Sakhawat Husain in Calcutta, founded schools. Minault notes that these Muslim professionals, philanthropists, and educators were involved in actions that were incipiently, if not overtly, political.

The traditional system of indigenous home-based learning came under increasing threat during the 19th century with the spread of English education and the declining utility of Persian learning. (Urdu emerged as a respectable language of public discourse and literary expression as part of the colonial encounter in the 1830s, when Persian was dis-established as the language of government). Private patronage, the backbone of indigenous education, for the *maulvis* (teachers), *ustads* (male tutor), and *ustanis* (female teacher), who were frequently old family retainers, also declined. Another form of patronage, the *auqaf* (singular: *waqf*) or Islamic charitable endowments came under increasing state scrutiny as the British government regarded them as tantamount to tax evasion.

Muslim women's home-based education was confined to the elite *ashraf* families. The curriculum was limited to the memorization of a few Quranic passages, some basic Arabic, Persian and Urdu. If reading was an unusual skill among *sharif* women of the 19th

century, then writing was very rare indeed. For these future wives and mothers, the primary focus of instruction remained the mastery of household chores and domestic duties. Conventional wisdom regarded the issue of women's education as both superfluous and dangerous. Ironically, this system declined during the 19th century, threatened by the declining supply of *ustanis*, just at the time when the demand for the services of these female tutors was increasing. As the idea of companionate marriage found increasing acceptance towards the end of the century, the modern, educated Muslim man desired a literate wife for himself and an enlightened mother for his children.

This need for educated wives and mothers for *sharif* families was fulfilled by the third generation, "the daughters of reform" who emerged in the early twentieth century. The early movement for Muslim women's education culminated in the late 1930s when a number of girls' schools founded earlier became degree colleges. The educated women of the urban, professional Muslim middle class represented the first generation of Muslim women authors and educators who were educated in schools, not at home. They were active professionally, in teaching, medicine, educational and social work; they contributed to women's magazines, wrote novels and stories based on their own lives; they founded associations and schools to spread education among Muslim women; they participated in the nationalist movement.

The activism of the "daughters of reform" is notable in three areas: the decision to leave purdah, usually a familial rather than an individual choice; the debates about purdah and polygamy in Muslim women's organizations such as the Anjuman-i-Khavatin-i-Islam; and the reform of personal law and the demand for greater legal rights for Muslim women. Among their ranks are Bint Nazrul Baqar (mother of the poet Qurratulain Hyder), Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz (1896-1979), Masuma Begam (1902-1990), Rashid Jahan (1905-1952), Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991), and Begam Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramulla (b. 1915).

The decision to abandon *purdah* was often motivated by a combination of paternalism, the social demands of western etiquette, and nationalistic fervour. Jahan Ara Shah Nawaz, her mother and sister all left *purdah* in the 1920s at the insistence of her father, Mian Muhammad Shafi, when he became Education Member in the Viceroy's cabinet:

(In Calcutta) Father asked us to dis-

card the veil and we went out to the New Market without 'burqas' for the first time in our lives... Shafi was used to spending his life with his women-folk, and he did not like the idea of attending and arranging mixed functions without his wife and daughters. Moreover, he had been carefully watching the progress of Hindu women and had felt for some time that Muslim women must give up 'purdah' and take their place in the building of the nation (p. 271).

The "secluded scholars" among Muslim women are no longer invisible to historical scrutiny. Minault's sensitive and engaging social history has brought to light the hitherto little known world of ordinary Muslim women, both within and outside purdah, who often struggled against great odds to acquire knowledge, and the men who aided and abetted their search. This book is an important contribution to the study of women's history, gender relations, Islamic studies and the cultural history of the colonial period.

Malini Sood has a Ph.D from State University of New York, Stony Brook, on U.S. History (late 19th and 20th). She is the author of Expatriate Nationalism and Ethnic Radicalism: The Ghadar Party in North America, 1910-1920 (to be published by Garland Press, New York in 1999).

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Domesticating Ethnicity

Susan Visvanathan

THE CIVILITY OF INDIFFERENCE

By F.G. Bailey

Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, Rs. 445.00

CITIZENSHIP, NATIONALITY AND ETHNICITY

By T.K. Oommen

Polity Press, 1997, pp. 270, price not stated.

ETHNICITY, SECURITY AND SEPARATISM IN INDIA

By Maya Chadha

Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 286, Rs. 475.00

The problem of ethnicity and nationalism is one of the most pressing problems of our time. In this review I will consider the various manifestations of this concept as it appears in the writings of three social scientists, F.G. Bailey, T.K. Oommen and Maya Chadha. F.G. Bailey's work is very complex, very abstract and very cynical. When scholars of the fifties and sixties become emeritus, they seem to be able to produce pieces of writing which are immediately published because of their reputation, and the slant toward brilliance that still runs in the work, and a lifetime of insights that are fearless and confident. Their narrative also turns mildly biographical and nostalgic.

Underlying all this easy raconteur style however is a deadening conservatism, and an ideological underpinning which made caste analyses for more than four decades a tryst with hierarchy, consensus and "freedom from conflict".

Bisipara, studied by Bailey in the late fifties appears again, pinned down like a frayed butterfly wing. The main axes of the book centres around the complex world of the Kond (dominant tribals) distillers and the untouchable Panos. The questions posed are how they lived, interacted and negotiated difference, and why they did not become genocidal in the late fifties, though they might today—but Bailey doesn't know for sure since he's enjoying a sunny old age in California.

Underlying this text is the assumption that if people know their place—the rich man in his castle, the poor man at the gate—and live accordingly there

will never be violence. Categories of race and ethnicity are used substitutively—and the idea of an Indian people is fragmentalized into the problematic conjunction of race with caste. Since this book is written like an anthropological memoir, no systematic review of the debates is ever deemed necessary. There is an interweaving of colonial pasts with present-day narratives (interestingly key narrative texts were written out for the anthropologist by the 'natives') but none of these are supported by any systematic historical analyses other than passing references. The colonial administrator sporadically mentioned, has a preoccupation with literacy, as a result a startling number of adult men are literate—not that it was of much use to them—according to Bailey. It is this cynical undertone which any professional sociologist or social anthropologist would find taxing. These kinds of personal forays become extremely oppressive, including the anti-Gandhian and anti-Socialist character of Bailey's narrative. He finds moral fervour misplaced—people live in a continuous round of cheating, lying, evading, negotiating and that is how power is dealt with. This in a society with scarce resources where rulers and subjects share the same limited resources. The imperialist tone of the narrative (Bailey anticipates the critic and says "Yes I am imperialist—what else can I be coming from post-war England in the 50s?") is so striking that it terrorized me. Is it taken for granted that poor natives always cheat? People survive according to Bailey because they accept that each cheats

the other if given a chance.

Frankly, I think anthropologists should stop reviving 40-year old notes and retire gracefully without engaging with the 'new' dragons of ethnography such as subjectivity and narrative. As long as they were expounding structure and culture they gave us sections of reality, but now they want to write "truth" and what it says about themselves is frightening—colonialism reappears in new and frightening forms, as Bailey spells out the idiom that the natives are liars, thieves and manipulators, that "harijan" was a "God-word" that has created social conflict in a way "untouchable" never did.

Yes, freedom has meant corruption and death, but ideologies and hope still live in many different ways and it would be useful to go back to a method that helps us to understand corruption, death, violence rather than stand at a distance and talk about the "rationality" of forms of behaviour whether it is consensus caste ideology, or genocide and fascism; or the relationship between scheduled castes and tribes in an area as problematic as Bisipara in the fifties and the nineties. To look at "ideology" as continuously contested space as Bailey does is problematic in the contexts where it is continuously lived and experienced, either as sociological method which has certain rules and limits, or as value systems such as religion, tribe, caste, race or ethnicity which certainly cannot be conflated as has often been done.

The book remains interesting, however, because of its multistrands, the old colonialist affection for distant, remote and obscure places so different from the intellectual's ivory tower of the western university town. I don't wish to denigrate this seeking of the other—but only to highlight that difference is much more complex than articulating the rationality of hierarchy and negotiation. Oscillating between the conventional power-authority studies of politics in India in the fifties and sixties and the West's inability to grasp the tensions of caste, class, history, culture, society and modernism. *The Civility of Indifference* should excite an entire new generation to enter into those spaces which Bailey has delineated—mythology, history, the national movement, kingship, Oriya, Kond, the absence of women—and give us ethnographies that helps us to understand our people, rather than a simple bifurcation of civilized and backwoods which Bailey operates with.

Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity by T.K. Oommen is a fine clear book, targeted for a student audience. The sharp lines of argument, the insights of a long

teaching career will appeal to lay people, and those academics embarking on a new trajectory of research or class room discussion. Unlike F.G. Bailey's book, which has (through its indifference to the debates and the assumption that by treating caste as "race" we can handle the problem of difference, segregation and hierarchy) made the problem more complex, T.K. Oommen attempts to create sharp distinctions and boundaries showing why it is dangerous to obfuscate categories. He is concerned with the central problem of nationalism and ethnicity in a way that helps us to reformulate our objective positions on difference, identity, state, citizenship, ethnicity, class and race.

This self-conscious attempt at clarifying has its own agenda: sociology and history can after all become agents of particular political ideologies, as neo-fascist movements have shown the world over. How can we then use the tools of our trade to understand what is happening, and offer models of creative and dialogic living, which is after all the aim of every sociologist? The destruction of societies, of communities, the homogenization of sub-societies and groups will render the sociologist a bored functionary of the state or dead from lack of resources.

Oommen contests the interchangeability of terms such as citizenship, nationality and ethnicity. Further time has made the use of First, Second and the Third World very disturbing, since there have been so many shifts across the globe with regard to class situation and party formation. Add to this, the "colonial" and the muddle is complete. Colonized societies don't all belong to the Third World (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand). Colonialism itself could either be 'transplanted and replicative' where in fact the colonizer never moved out leading to the genocide of indigenous communities, or 'intrusive and oppressive' where the colonizer did leave after protracted freedom struggles.

For the author, ethnification and ethnicity are the central concepts around which the rest of the book hangs together. Through ethnification, which exaggerates the link between culture and territory "the possibility of a nation sustaining its integrity is put into jeopardy". He classifies this into several categories:

1. ethnification which transforms the original inhabitants of a territory into a minority or marginalized, such as tribals in India,
2. ethnification arising out of division of homelands such as Mizos and Nagas,

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ethnification which creates the people into "outsiders"—Muslims in Bosnia, Kashmiri Hindus, denial of full participation to those who are descended from immigrants, settler communities who identify with the original homeland, such as Non-resident Indians in America, ethnification that arises from the process of homogenizing into a common people: methods such as disallowing the use of the mother tongue and prejudice against ghetto culture, ethnification of those who are invited to work in a particular country, but do not share the rights and privileges of citizens, such as Malayalis in the Gulf and the ethnification of communities who while accepted by their hosts, still intend to return to their own country.

How then, Oommen asks, do ethnics become nations? Ethnification is the process by which dominant groups tend to turn some people into 'outsiders' regardless of time and history, the period of their residence which may run into millennia, and their assimilation. Thus 'who came first' is always a difficult and dangerous question—everyone in India, other than certain adivasis are probably 'outsiders' either from the Central Asian plains, what is now territorially designated as Pakistan, but is commonly known as our ancient civilizational cradle. The tension between Aryans and Dravidians (which is what Bailey glibly refers to perhaps as 'race'—how did the varna system handle colour differences being the question) is always so potent that only the nation-state has been able to regulate it through its mechanism of federation. Srinivas' notion of pan-Hinduism was in its own way a secular construct—it handled the varieties of Hinduism, the alcohol, the possession and the meat sacrifices of the lower castes, and the vegetarianism and the shastras of the higher. It only with the homogenizing principle of fundamentalist Hinduism that the ethnification of Hinduism itself takes place, and we will soon have right wing organizations taking on the onerous task of indicating what a good, true and faithful Hindu is. Once all Indians were nationalists, but now only Hindu nationalists are nationalists, and the rest are tainted by secularism or particular faiths and beliefs inimical to the 'true faith'. In the words of a Hindu nationalist "It is a matter of faith not of law". Oommen uses his ability to collage masses of material to ask the student to

question society through concepts. Of course, most students can't afford the book at about £ 14 but perhaps some local publisher could bring down the costs in a student edition. The book has interesting, lucid but abstract sections or trouble spots the world over where ethnicity, nationality and the state are striving to separate out, though I must say I missed an essay on Palestine, and on the Gulf states. Hopefully, Oommen will provide us a book on Malayali identity in the Gulf, since being a Syrian Christian he is bound to have many relatives working long hard years so that daughters may be provided dowries and sons an inheritance. In fact, this has been the paradox of Kerala: a long history of association with Arab countries—Kerala's sea demarcates that relationship—so that Indian people have been visited for long from 'the West' with ideas (Greek, Roman, Jew, Christian, Muslim) and gold in exchange for linen, spices and pearls. This summer when I visited my mother at Alappuzha, she carefully took out some cardamoms, cloves and pepper from the cupboard, where she keeps her valuables. "Sam got it for me in Saudi Arabia" she said proudly. I went completely hysterical with laughter. "But they (the spices) went from Malabar" I said when I could. "Yes", but they (Arabs) get the better quality, so Mathai or Samuel always bring me some."

Similarly in Belfast last year listening to the music I found strange familiar resonances. "Didn't you know Tagore borrowed his tunes from Irish music?" my friends asked me. And in missionary records, I read that the Irish and the 'Indians' were descended from the same belt in those archaic steppes. Kai Freise records that an Indian gentleman whomethis father by chance said something like "You're a German? We are both Aryans. I love Hitler." All these are people's versions of what they are and who they've been, and Oommen in the grand tradition of Durkheim and Weber is wary of the conflation of caste,

Ethnicity, Secularism and Separatism in India attempts to bring a holistic perspective to understanding the politics of India in the eighties and nineties. It foregrounds it in the Nehru years, before the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, by locating how secularism, socialism and democracy worked.

race and ethnicity since these can mean such entirely different things in different territories and contexts. For those looking for original philosophical comments this book will not answer, but all those interested in seeing how collages can give new insights, a different picture or create clarity out of confusion and banalities, will find in Oommen's book, a rich and rewarding experience. T.K. Oommen wrote this book in Hungary and my question is—Did he carry all these latest works on ethnicity with him, or are social science libraries in Hungary better equipped than ours are? It seems odd that a fragmentalized and betrayed country like Hungary can afford to buy the latest books and our universities cannot.

Ethnicity, Secularism and Separatism in India attempts to bring a holistic perspective to understanding the politics of India in the eighties and nineties. It foregrounds it in the Nehru years, before the Indo-Chinese war of 1962, by locating how secularism, socialism and democracy worked. These were the grand years of nation-state building, where the colonial apparatus of unity of territory was accepted as a given. How then did the "ethnic nations" of the Sikhs, the Kashmiris, and the Tamils (the selected cases in this book) begin their struggle for autonomy? Chadda is very clear that her work will have no moral tones of pious indictment, and she does achieve this to a very great extent. Her work is in stark contrast to the book on Punjab by Joyce Pettigrew which takes a partisan position on guerilla warfare, and while providing a detailed and terrifying account of the history of torture in Punjab takes the reader into an impassioned space of pleas for secession! Most Indians wear the cloak of Indian identity quite securely in spite of fundamentalism, homogeneity, religious and linguistic difference and now the nuclear bomb which might leave neither nation, state or citizen in its aftermath. So Chadda's work comes as a relief, because here is an attempt to delineate, describe and record through secondary materials and interviews. The interpretation is not forced upon one but each reader will feel the sense of events, familiar and unforgettable crowding one out. Like T.K. Oommen's work it targets for the lay reader (the 'Common Reader' in Virginia Woolf's terms who is discerning and critical) and those who are not specialists. The political scientists in India will probably read the work and see it as a collation of excerpts from *India Today* (before it became vaguely fundamentalist and ran fascist columns). However, this sense of the past through journal, newspaper clippings

and interviews with Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene suddenly makes one realize that we have lived through it all and these have been dangerous exciting years. The chapters on Sri Lanka and Pakistan are particularly of interest. She shows how India's concern with maintaining the balance in the subcontinent led to Indira Gandhi's involvement, which was later taken over by Rajiv Gandhi in a more strident way, the brutalization of the Tamils as a people (when once according to legend they were the gentlest of all!) the embarrassments of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, the involvement of Tamil ethnic and national identities across India and Sri Lanka, the internecine warfare of the Tamils themselves, the negotiations with the LTTE who cannibalized all other groups to emerge as leaders, the terrible end to Rajiv Gandhi's cosmetic surgery campaigns by his own assassination.

In the chapter on Pakistan Chadda discusses how close India and Pakistan have been to war since the 1990s over Siachen and Kashmir. She discusses with alarming foresight (but that's what good sociologists and political scientists have in common—not revelation, not prophecy, not cruel hindsight—but the awareness that time and events have logical consequences) the nuclear arms race. At the edge of wiping out the most ancient and continuously surviving and shared civilization off the map, through sheer hatred felt only by politicians and their gullible followers, one has to stop just for oneself. Finally Gandhi's way of nonviolence won us our freedom. And it could be practised only by an individual, who shared this space of restraint with others. The methodology of ahimsa was thus the fine balance between self and the other, individual and collectivity. It is renunciation and action combined. We were right not to sign the CTBT, but wrong to explode, it was wrong to pollute the earth of our desert, wrong to engage in acts of suspicion, believing that we would thus become a 'great power'. Last year a retired army officer lectured at the Nehru Museum. Perhaps he was one of the seventy who sold our country to 'blind faith' and to the hegemony of majoritarianism. He argued that we needed the bomb for external and internal security. The hawks nodded, and the dissenters felt aghast at what he said. But Professor Ravinder Kumar suddenly said something very moving, "Sir, rest assured that the people of India will always lay down their lives for their country, if ever such a moment of war were to come, as they once did in the freedom movement." But the military chief felt that push button security was all that the country deserved. Per-

haps he felt when the politicians are corrupt, a people cannot make sacrifices?

Are we going to bear the unspoken guilt of America (hidden under chewing gum and perfume) or bear the agony of Hiroshima in the womb of India?

Oommen and Chadda's work both demand from each reader that fundamental exercise of self-reflexivity. How did we move from being a nation concerned with "relational control" and "interlocking balances" (Chadda's terms) where panchsheel and federal segmentary tensions operated to maintain equilibrium, to (1) Indira's rasputinization of politics through corrupt intermediaries, (2) Rajiv's banana boat republic with more incredibly unsuitable friends and advisers, (3) The Rogue Nation which breaks all rules to get to what has been called 'shakti'. Some have wrongly associated the bomb with shakti. Shakti is about energy, creativity, desire, fertility and awesomeness. That awesomeness is holy as Rudolf Otto would say, and in Hinduism it is about justice.

What Chadda and Oommen ask for is that we remember what human rights, citizenship and justice are, and we should ask for these, and protect what we have, and protest when it is being taken away. Martin Buber, one of the greatest proponents of dialogue once said that a nation is a people. It is like having eyes. Nationality is a disease—you are constantly aware that you have eyes. Somewhere that irritation of self-consciousness makes one arrogant, defensive, coercive, humourless. How terrible that a people with the greatest diversity should now be reduced to a state without nations. We cannot return to the steppes, or to Harappa, or to Persia or to the autochthonous earth. Cannot we live with our differences, our personal faiths, our rights as equal citizens working for freedom to believe, justice and reason? It is this acceptance of rationality, law and human rights that our Constitution has always upheld.

Can there be a conclusion to a problem as vast and multi-faceted as this one? Each generation works out its problems experientially and it is the role of the social scientist to record these shifts of measuring, to read between the lines of text, to express the contour lines of social structure. We may agree or disagree with them ideologically, but all three fulfil their tasks as interpreters of their times from whatever vantage point they hold.

Susan Visvanathan teaches Gender and Cultural Studies at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

A Rawlsian Trajectory for Contemporary India

Valerian Rodrigues

SECULARISM, DEMOCRACY, JUSTICE: IMPLICATIONS OF RAWLSIAN PRINCIPLES IN INDIA

By Nalini Rajan

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 220, Rs. 295.00

Rawls looms large in the contemporary discourse of political philosophy. It has been so since *A Theory of Justice* (TJ) hit the stands in 1971. Rawlsian liberalism and communitarianism that shaped themselves contesting the central premises of each other, led to the reformulation of several key concepts of political philosophy such as justice, liberty, equality, rights, civil society, state, community and political obligation and the fashioning of new concepts such as overlapping consensus, belonging, identity and recognition. This engagement despite their other differences has safeguarded a normative space in spite of sweeping winds of postmodernity and deconstruction. Although Rawls himself has radically reformulated his position, primarily in his interface with the communitarians, he has continued to argue for the autonomy of reason and the self from the given good while at the same time suggesting the desirable and the feasible public domain for plural societies.

This work assumes the continued salience of Rawlsian ideas particularly as they were formulated in TJ and explore their implications for public policy in India. For this purpose certain key concerns haunting the public space in India are identified such as secularism, communalism, the Gandhian legacy, contending versions of democracy,

It is naive to believe today that a certain Guru, even though he may be of the stature of Rawls, has the mantra to treat an entire spectrum of problems confronting a nation like India. A claim of the kind would be a heteronomous posture methodologically which no amount of clamour of autonomy with which the book is laced can repair.

positive discrimination towards the disadvantaged, federalism and panchayat raj and women's movement. They are organized around the four themes of Secularism, Democracy, Social Justice and Agency. Naturally, a great deal is expected of Rawls!

The overt concerns with messy political issues, however desirable they might be in themselves, makes the author compromise with the Rawlsian framework as the neophyte does with her former ways. While she displays little acquaintance with Gandhism and Marxism, except for stray secondary references, she is out to demolish them as adversaries. Her coupling of certain intellectual trends such as Gandhism and postmodernism is from hearsay with little evidence addressed to corroborate it. She lapses into naive descriptive accounts on several issues—on Indian Muslims, Kashmir, just to mention two—in a work loudly proclaimed as political philosophy. At the end of the book you are left with a feeling that there was little to take back home except sharing, in a general way, a political stance.

To be fair to the author there are certain themes that are cogently dealt with. The introduction reviews the Rawlsian project, addresses certain standard criticisms against it and makes a case for the Rawls of TJ against that of *Political Liberalism* (PL) although the kind of universality that the author wants to see triumph in India could be much better served through the theoretical canvass of PL than TJ. In this section a range of literature is very competently handled highlighting the desirable criteria to assess the concerns mentioned above. The exposition of the principle of autonomy and its Rawlsian revision, and its irreconcilability with secularism understood as *Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava* is lucid. From such a position the author posits the delineations of secularism much more sharply enabling her to situate herself strategically in terms of the debate on secularism in India. Further, the author displays deep insights while discussing the theme of agency. She finds

Rawlsian understanding of power and gender issues inadequate and within his overall framework deploys the concept of autonomy to negotiate with them competently. On democracy and social justice the exposition remains highly fragmented and does not engage with the rich literature on these themes.

There is little reason why Gandhism and Gandhism should be made the whipping horse in the study, with so few resources to command, unless it remains unstated and directed against absent adversaries. Gandhism and Gandhism could be constructed as upholding a valorized notion of the good or a communitarian situatedness of the self against the Rawlsian 'priority of right over the good' or 'the autonomy of the self from its ends'. But the author does not undertake any one of these journeys but uncritically attributes to Gandhism a religious agenda which is not demarcated from the communal agendas.

Further the author locates an interface between Gandhian tradition and postmodernist thought. Between them the author discerns "some overlapping interests. Both ideologies endorse a kind of arbitrariness and refuse the notion of rationality and the autonomous self, in the name of exposing a radical cultural pluralism" (p. 29). Setting aside postmodernism for a while, one wonders whether Gandhian tradition endorses 'arbitrariness' and 'radical cultural pluralism' and refuses the notion of 'rationality' and 'autonomous self'. There is little evidence advanced by the author to support such ascriptions. The diatribe against Gandhism and Gandhism is continued throughout the book. Gandhism is supposed to have set the tone for communal activity by "providing legitimacy to a certain kind of political activity" (p. 43); he was supposed to be "a relentless explorer of immediacy—immediate needs, immediate means, immediate ends" (p. 44); he advocated, "religious ethics in political practice" (ibid); for Gandhism, "truth has to do with affirmation of faith rather than rationality" (ibid); Gandhism is an "exercise in high aesthetics" (p. 46); Gandhism's definition of rationality was "unanchored and pluralistic"; Gandhism encourages "the introduction of mysticism in political activity and postmodernist thought by denouncing both selfhood and the institutions on which claims may be made" (p. 63); "The Gandhian practice of quasi-spiritual politics" (p. 201) etc. The author magisterially declares, "It was not just that Gandhian practices were non-feasible, but they were no longer even desirable" (p. 48).

The author makes a distinction be-

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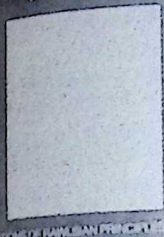
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SECULARISM,
DEMOCRACY,
JUSTICE



ANANTHOPOL

between secularism and secularization and suggests a qualified activist role for the state in the latter sense against the centrality postulated between religion and state. While this distinction is made by others and offers immense possibilities, she does not look into the argument that secularization may strengthen an anti-secular tendency. On secularization she indicates the possibilities of drawing on the work of Nozick, Sur and so on but acknowledges little the implications it will have in Rawlsian positions of TJ upholding the right over the good.

In this connection it might be worth pointing out the assertion of the author that secularism as *Sarva Dharma Sama* is the constitutional position in India (See pp. 67, 73, 77, etc). The Constitution does not uphold any single meaning of secularism. Moreover, in the constituent assembly debates there are several notions of secularism at play. The author does not succeed in upholding priority of a regime of rights over the good as she set out to argue. She, of course, launches a major attack on Rawls' PL and sees it as 'a compromise', 'Hobbesian tint', 'upholding pragmatism'. In the context of the discussion on uniform civil code says, "I would add that the right to revise aims and objectives will be possible for women only if they direct their demands to the state as individuals rather than as members of the same communities. Which they mean to criticise" (p. 95). However, she makes a volte-face after three pages and talks of "a double-pronged strategy". First, since we all belong "somewhere", cultural membership—as a compartment of self-esteem—must constitute one of the Rawlsian primary goods (p. 98). Culture and Community are quietly resurrected in several other instances. The author advocates the case for a wholly caste-based reservation policy for OBCs and dalits: "Any talk of eliminating the creamy layer (or the economically privileged from reservation quotas in

each backward caste will only dilute the force of the reservation policy as a whole" (p. 73). What is this but caving in to unadulterated communitarian positions.

The author's passion for casting the net wide to bring issues under scrutiny leads to her making forays into Marxism and some shoddy and ill-informed statements: Gramsci is seen as the first to "delineate a cogent theory of the constitution of a nation-state" (p. 105). She says, "Much of the writing in left-wing circles has tended to focus on the economic aspects and neglected socio-economic aspects and neglected socio-cultural aspirations as 'false consciousness'" (Ibid). Such statements abound in the work.

There are obviously wrong statements in the book: "Locke's point was only the preservation of *life, liberty and estate* should be entrusted to the state (emphasis mine). All other rights and powers should remain with the people" (p. 112). There are others not right if not wholly wrong: "Lenin regarded nationalism as a bourgeoisie capitalist phase" (p. 106).

It is naive to believe today that a certain Guru, even though he may be of the stature of Rawls, has the mantra to treat an entire spectrum of problems confronting a nation like India. A claim of the kind would be a heteronomous posture methodologically which no amount of clamour of autonomy with which the book is laced can repair. Besides, identity and community are such marked features of the Indian ambience that any attempt to develop a public reason by ignoring or denouncing them will have little capacity to become defensible contruents.

In the process of contradicting herself the strength of the work could be easily lost. Inconsistencies overreach and judgements made on scant evidence. A strong Rawlsian kind of a case could be constructed for India which could suggest that no just and stable society can be established in India unless it is constructed on the twin principles of equal liberties and consideration to the disadvantaged. It would involve privileging of the right over appeals of the good. It would involve the necessity of rearticulating identities on the basis of the right than constantly negotiating zones of agreement based on overlapping consensus. In the process of exploring such a position the central concepts of the Rawlsian project could be made critical. Methodologically it would be tedious, if not unwieldy. But the present venture has not been able to keep its promise.

Valerian Rodrigues is Professor of Political Science at Mangalore University.

'The Aura of Discontent'

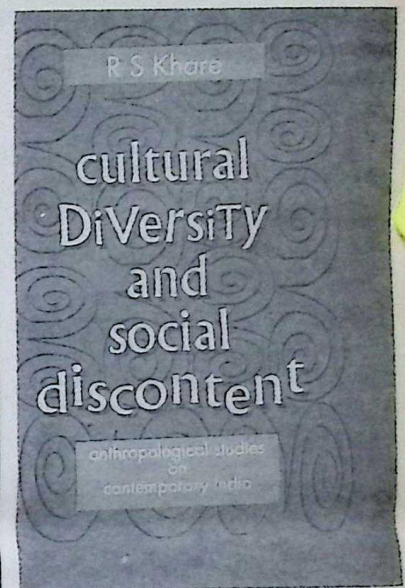
Ravindra K. Jain

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL DISCONTENT: ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES ON CONTEMPORARY INDIA

By R.S. Khare

Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 282, Rs. 395.00 (cloth), Rs. 225.00 (paper)

I wish to begin writing this review at a tangent. It is my firm belief that home-grown commentators on the contemporary Indian crisis, viz., those contributing to Indian journals like *The Economic and Political Weekly*, *Social Scientist*, *Seminar*, even *Mainstream* or, for that matter, *India Today* would not have juxtaposed cultural diversity with social discontent (emphases mine) in quite the same manner as does Professor R.S. Khare of the Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia, U.S.A. For most of us cultural diversity by itself, unmediated by political and economic circumstances, would not lead to social discontent. For the author of this book, on the other hand, a long discourse on the cultural 'self' and the 'other' is enough to subsume the makings of social discontent. Ordinarily what one would have expected was that—rather than splitting hairs about fine distinctions between society and culture, self and the 'other' as meta-concepts produced, ironically, by ethnographic fieldwork *à la* the disciplinary discourse in socio-cultural anthropology—straight analytical interweaving of politico-economic and socio-historical factors would lead to a diagnosis of the crisis. Supposing, at the most, that the anthropological author in this case was insistent on being bracketed together with, as he apparently does in this book, 'crisis sociologists' like Veena Das and the 'subalternists' (pp. 47–48) he would



have given cultural factors a run for their money. This is precisely what Professor Khare tries to do. In the process, however, we get referencing to an impressive array of books and journal articles produced either in the western world of learning or the West influenced Indian academia on broad themes like human rights, traumatic events like nuclear bombings, feminist approaches, Indian philosophy and philosophy in general, postmodernism, historiography et al plus an insistent resort to fieldwork data that is here presented as 'co-responsive ethnography'. The lat-

"Located in a distinct frame of modernity, these three scholars (Dumont, Marriott and Srinivas) bring to India their own preferred modern (read 'scientific') intellectual concerns, methods and analytical perspectives. Though they studied India from 'within', only Srinivas, it seems, freely admitted those socially diverse contexts and values which mid-20th century India demanded. In comparison, Dumont preferred India to be simply ideologically opposed to modernity, while Marriott eschewed the tradition/modernity issue by focussing on India's 'paradigms' of selected classical transactional essences (or substances)."

From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

"Exploited but vigorous and alienated but not passive, the Untouchable women today defy any simple categorization. To themselves 'three dimensional' with 'triple habits' or triple practical sense, they are at once confined yet persistent, deprived yet sensible and caring, and suppressed yet alert and practical. Although a part of the Indian society, they find themselves like no other. Upper-caste or modern educated women are no consolation to them, because they are too blinkered. Untouchable women convey this 'unique helplessness' by their strident speech, sharp gestures, and a smouldering private and public gaze, especially when wronged, hurt and suffering."

From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

ter is an interesting *deus ex machina*: it means a dialogue in Hindustani with the middle-class educated and lower caste-and-class uneducated men and women in the Lucknow region reported in the pages of this book as striking phrases and metaphors basically reflecting the mental equipoise—essentially emic expressions—of the inhabitants of a comfortable and compromised society. I am constrained to put this gloss on Khare's ethnography because the irony is that even when the author reiterates the troubled, i.e. oppressed and exploited lives of the untouchable women for instance, the evidence is not conveyed by means of case-studies but by dialogic conversations via the phrases and metaphors already referred to. The whole approach is expressive rather than instrumental, and the nagging feeling here is that one is being offered so much chaff without the grain. One moment the author gives field-expressions of discontent and the other moment those expressions are sought to be subsumed in some grand Foucauldian or Derridian meta-concepts of pain and confinement.

To see why this should be so, I wish to carry my approach 'at a tangent' a little forward. Here is a non-resident Indian intellectual, an anthropology professor in the U.S., tape-recorder in hand, collecting the overt and hidden transcripts of the cultural dilemmas facing common people in the Lucknow region. This itself is a setting of some deep mistrust; the author's locational predicament is already a problem. I have personally known a scholar much more senior and distinguished than Professor Khare, an expatriate Indian social scientist, who would not let him speak in India on the Indian campuses

on the logic of 'what right and authority do you have?' Reciprocally, as someone who has researched the Indian diaspora as an Indian academic for the last thirty years, I have myself encountered a senior expatriate Indian professor refusing to pay for my book, *Indian Communities Abroad*, because according to him this was based on capital produced by them (the expatriates) and I had no business to price it to them! In these encounters the identity quandary of the expatriate Indian intellectual cannot be wished away nor, in equal measure, the cussedness of the

home-grown intellectual.

Having noted all this, let us try and assess 'objectively' (if at all possible) what R.S. Khare's book has to offer us. Even at the risk of emphasizing 'stylistics' over matter, I must complain that part one of the book, 'Disciplinary Issues and Perspectives' is marred by a selective and repetitive assessment of the work of three anthropological writers on India: Dumont, Marriott and Srinivas. To use a phrase dear to Professor Khare, such individualizing of authors on Indian society is "out of sync" with the problematic of the book, viz., social discontent. One is not denying the value of critical summaries of the views of these leading anthropologists in forming a perspective on cultural diversity in India and its interpretation but where do they lead us in negotiating the causes, consequences and directions of social discontent in contemporary India? The second part of the book where the theme of 'Conflicted Self, Others, Violence and Justice' is taken up, is extremely sketchy, programmatic and indicative rather than substantive and definitive. In this part, in particular, the referencing style of the author is pronounced and obtrusive. The whole exercise on female infanticide, *sati*, communalism and the Bhopal gas tragedy seems like an effort to frame the issues in a larger perspective rather than attempts at a diagnosis and resolution of the crises themselves. The frame that we discern is global and national with only vague linkages with the local and regional settings; the prime

"But to put things in perspective, India nevertheless remains a civilization much more inclusive than all these contemporary predicaments suggest. At its heart is the vast Indian (Hindu and non-Hindu) majority that still lives by that whole range of 'multiform' reasoning that still manages through all the different pressures of cultural diversity and discord. India's vast reservoirs of myths, local pasts, and workaday yet caring social life are still shaped by such a reasoning. It still conjures up hope when injustices weigh India down. Such reasoning does not find that diversity and multiplicity just have one solution—the violent politics of counter-exclusion and annihilation of opposition. There is also that distinct way which my Lucknow informants insisted on, in which life is not for always seeing everything only in political and power terms".

From *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*

purpose seems to be to pedagogically insert these Indian events in the contemporary world of learning and reflection about these issues in the developed West.

On the positive side once the reader takes in his stride the expressive methodology, he/she is bound to enjoy and feel encouraged by the example of a leading Indian anthropologist (R.S. Khare), a male at that—shaking loose the gendered habitus and really trying hard to come to terms with talking, sharing and empathizing with untouchable females. Here incidentally, the 'Indianness' of Professor Khare is a big asset. This reviewer has found that many a time when western anthropologists claim that the only way to get one's informants talking is with a glass of beer or whisky in hand, they are merely rationalizing their own culture-bound tastes of conviviality and free expression. Similarly, to say that a level-headed, non-flag-waving, almost traditionalist Hindustani-speaking 'babu' (p. 151) and scholar could not get close to untouchable women without having to almost 'fancy dress' as a feminist is disproved beyond doubt by Professor Khare's achievement. He has eminently succeeded in negotiating with untouchable women by essentially being what he as a multivocal, multivalent Indian whom the pluralistic Hindustani culture of Lucknow has moulded 'naturally'. Not only does the author deserve our commendation but we also feel that the undercurrent of the commonality and complementarity of gender issues in the lower-down spectrum of Indian society which Khare's ethnography subtly brings out should be taken up as a distinct Indian dimension of feminist readings cross-culturally.

There is much more in this book that is pedagogically very useful, especially its detailed and up-to-date bibliography. I must end, though, on the interruption caused in reading this book by a large number of 'notes' as the addendum to each chapter. In fact, I must confess that in reading chapter 5, 'The Body, Sensoria, and Self of the Powerless: Remembering 'Re-Membering' Indian Untouchable Women', I resolved at the outset not to read the notes in my initial reading. That paid rich dividends because once I was through with the 'notes-less' reading it enabled me to deconstruct and then, 'with notes', to reconstruct the argument.

Ravindra K. Jain is Professor of Social Anthropology/Sociology at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He had earlier (1966-75) been University Lecturer in Indian Sociology and Fellow of Wolfson College, Oxford University.

Reading Between the Lines of Indian Folk Culture:

Sontheimer's God and His Versions

Dilip Chitre

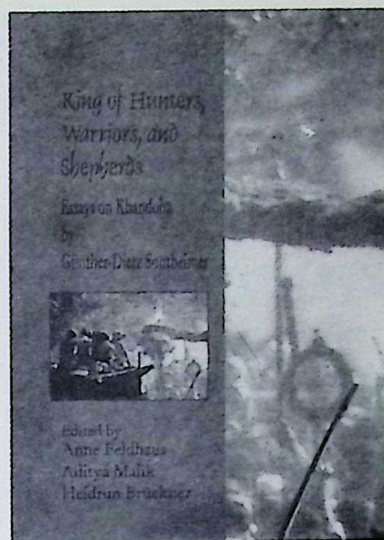
KING OF HUNTERS, WARRIORS AND SHEPHERDS: ESSAYS ON KHANDOBA
By Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer. Edited by Anne Feldhaus, Aditya Malik and Heidrun Bruckner

Radha Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Manohar Publications,
New Delhi, 1997, pp. 353, Rs. 600.00

When he died of the very first heart-attack he suffered, Sontheimer was only fifty-eight years old. His creativity as a thinker was about to reach a peak and he was working simultaneously on several projects with different collaborators drawn from different disciplines. I was one of them. Sontheimer had involved me in his project to translate songs about Khandoba composed and sung by the god's devotees. We had been friends since the late 1960s. The basis of our first meeting was Sontheimer's interest in Marathi and Maharashtra. But as our friendship grew, it encompassed many more common interests and personal experiences. Sontheimer had already collected songs about Khandoba from several sources with the help of his field assistants Ramdas Atkar and Rajaram Zagade, who are mentioned in many of his essays and articles including those in this book. He had even prepared rough translations of some of the songs. But as he was sensitive to the unique stylistic 'flavour' of the Marathi originals, he wanted me to work with him as a poet and a translator of poetry. We had planned to finalize our versions in the forthcoming month of Āṣāḍha. As it turned out, Sontheimer died on June 1, 1992, *Somavati Amāvāsyā*. That was the day of Khandoba's festival in Jejuri, an event Sontheimer hated to miss. The last film made together by him and Henning Stegmüller, *King Khandoba's Hunting Expedition*, was meanwhile getting ready for its premiere. Instead, the film was shown as a part of his memorial to an audience of grieving friends, colleagues, and students. I was his house-guest for the larger part of three months in 1991-92, and visited him again in April-May 1992, just three weeks before his death. I was a witness to the frenzied overactivity, incessant smoking, and neglect of nourishment that eventually brought on the fatal heart-attack. Never before

had I felt so anxious about his health. He seemed so desperate and driven, so hard-pressed and panic-stricken, so visibly in a state of disorder that I was scared. Many of the projects he had undertaken were then nearing completion or reaching a critical stage; at the same time the future of his department was under threat and he was required to respond on its behalf. Always torn between the field and the desk, between the life of a researcher in India and a Professor and academic administrator in Germany, Sontheimer had somehow coped, and rather well, too. Now, just as some of his favourite projects were exciting him and making him eager, anxieties and insecurities in his academic environment were making demands on his attention. His career was cut short just when his best was about to come.

It was his early encounter with the late D.D. Kosambi, whom Sontheimer fondly remembered as one of his 'gurus', that liberated him from the dead-ends of classical Indology. In a television interview in Marathi a couple of years before his death, he described a precise turning point in his career as a researcher. He had expressed his disbelief at a Vedic reference to twelve bullocks being simultaneously used to pull the plough. Kosambi took him to Shirur, just outside of Pune, and showed him that the Vedic description was still a current practice, and not a figment of somebody's imagination. From that point on, said Sontheimer, he looked around in the field for facts corresponding to textual or even oral-traditional descriptions. He would spend years observing the same festival, for example, to discover details he had earlier missed. The classic example is of the *Somavati Amāvāsyā* festival at Jejuri celebrated on every no-moon Monday. (The Introduction to this volume cites Stanley's 1977 interpretation of this festival and notes how Sontheimer saw it as 'essentially Brahmanical'). When



they were making the epic documentary film *King Khandoba's Hunting Expedition*, Henning Stegmüller later told me, Sontheimer showed Stegmüller his Super-8 and 16mm footage of the festival, done by himself year after year, and photographs. In a way, he had shot the whole film earlier, recalled Stegmüller. Yet Sontheimer never felt he had observed the event in its totality. Each year, he found something in it that he had not seen before. He also realized that over the three decades or so that he had been observing this festival, it had mirrored the progression of a tiny segment of history itself. For example, successive generations of informants were themselves undergoing unmistakable change. The devotees of Khandoba were not a stream running parallel to modernizing, urbanizing India. They were also becoming a part of it. Different communities of the same

god's devotees had different perceptions of their deity. At the same time, coming together in his domain, as it were, they mirrored one another as well. There were no clear borders. There were many fuzzy areas. But there was no doubt that they formed one vast community worshipping a common god whose territory could be marked by certain outposts. This was an Indian model of multi-communal coherence. Sontheimer had developed an awareness of the principle of this coherence and his famous formulation of 'the five components of Hinduism' in an earlier statement of a sort of 'unified field theory' that encompasses all strata of Indian society from the tribal to the Brahmanic, including every ethnic and/or religious/communal element that has existed and interacted in the history of the subcontinent. In fact, Sontheimer would not have left out even pre-historic archaeological evidence from his comprehensive framework.

From very early on in his Indological career, Sontheimer broke new ground by focussing his attention on folk-religion. His doctoral and post-doctoral studies were very much in the orthodox domain of classical western Indology, including a serious look at Hindu law and a comprehensive exposure to the *Dharmasastras*. What could possibly be more Brahmanical than that? Folk-religion was at the other extreme. Its very sources were non-Brahminical. Instead of texts and commentaries on texts, it had oral traditions and non-literate informants. Instead of texts, it had oral traditions and non-literate informants. Instead of English,

The prototype Deccan god was eminently suitable to combine various heterogeneous tribes and social groups under his royal umbrella. This is one distinct feature of the god. The further we go to the north the more this dichotomy expressed by the two goddesses with the various social groups merges into the unity of Pārvatī. Here the second wife rather becomes an illusion, *māyā*, in fact the disguised Pārvatī. In the Deccan *Mhāṣā* may be identified with Pārvatī, but nobody will maintain that Bānāi and Pārvatī are identical. In Pañchmaḍhi in Madhya Pradesh we find a Śiva cult on the Cauragadh mountain. Here the devotees of Śiva have erected thousands of iron *triśūlas* for Śiva. The second wife, according to the local legends of the Korkū, is a Korkū by name Girjā. She comes from a village near Cauragadh. But the priest or sadhus on Cauragadh maintain that Girijā and Pārvatī are one. This reminds us of the story told by the 18th cent. Marathi poet Śrīdhara in his adaptation of the *Kaśikhanda*, in which Pārvatī in the disguise of a Bhil woman searches for the angry Śiva. Śiva falls in love with her before he recognizes the disguised Pārvatī.

Sanskrit and the self-proclaimed 'standard' Marathi of the urbanized elites, he would have had to find his way through 'gavran' (colloquial/vulgar/rustic) dialects restricted to the communities he studied. But this is precisely what attracted his attention and stimulated his appetite for original research and exploration. None of his caste Hindu friends in Pune, Bombay, and elsewhere in Maharashtra were even sufficiently aware of communities such as the Hatkar Dhangars whom Sontheimer researched and documented. The archival material he has left behind is an astonishing treasure of linguistic, stylistic, poetic, narrative, musical material produced by this community. Sontheimer developed his own procedures of field investigation and trained his two assistants, Atkar and Zagade, since they were teenagers schooling in Jejuri. Today, they are expert 'hunters and gatherers of information' of the kind Sontheimer collected in Maharashtra, Karnāṭaka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and even beyond these principal areas. Sontheimer was very conscious of the boundaries between Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical India. But he also knew the points of entry from the one to the

other and saw in it a pre-historic division. The two worlds had simultaneously existed side by side, like *vana* and *ksetra* (one of Sontheimer's richest insights.) Sontheimer's 'Brahmanical' informants would include a wide range of Marathi-speaking scholars and intellectuals: among them would be R.N. Dandekar, the late S.G. Tulpule, R.C. Dhere, Prabhakar Mande, and Ashok Kelkar—as a cross-sample. It needs to be emphasized that he gave equal, if not greater weightage to such 'non-Brahmanical' informants as the late Limba Torve and Sakharām Lakade who figure prominently in the essays in the volume under review. In Sontheimer's comprehensive view of Hindu culture and society, the Brahmanical is not placed hierarchically above the non-Brahmanical but functionally in relation to it and in dynamic coherence. Although I am hardly qualified to say so with any measure of authority, academic or empirical, it seems to me to be the hallmark of his new Indology, often derisively dismissed by his detractors as 'the Sontheimer school'. The editors of the present volume belong to this school. Heidrun Bruckner and Aditya Malik were students of Sontheimer at the

South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. Anne Feldhaus, a product of North American university culture, has been even more prolific in terms of publications than the former. Also, she is the only active 'follower' of Sontheimer who works in Maharashtra and among Marathi speakers as Sontheimer himself did. Her publications of the last ten years show how powerfully she has been influenced by Sontheimer.

Sontheimer's bold, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to 'Hinduism' and his emphasis on the relatively neglected 'non-Brahmanical' sources and themes provoked hostility and this antagonism was expressed in the guise of academic scepticism and rational doubt. The really irritating fact was that Sontheimer's subjects and themes were unfamiliar to most other Indologists: they were ignorant of what he was presenting. It was not accessible through any previously published literature in English or Sanskrit. Even in Marathi, the material documented and presented by Sontheimer is the outcome of his own investigations. Nothing makes people more uncomfortable than the slightest reminder of their own ignorance. What we have here is a product of pioneering research and the documented traditions are fragile and changing or even rapidly perishing. Sontheimer looks at Kṣaṇḍobā from a series of perspectives in a true holistic spirit—the historical, the mythical, the ritual, the folk-artistic and the theatrical, the tribal and the communal. His themes, too, are original in their very conception. For example, he compares Rudra and Kṣaṇḍobā as 'folk-gods' and demonstrates revealing continuities in both the deities and their cults. To do so, at the very outset he deliberately sets aside the Siva of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. He also excludes the rituals and philosophy of various Śaivite sects, for example the *Pasupatas*. Sontheimer's attempt here is to show that the Siva of the Sanskrit texts is not the exclusive successor of Rudra from which Kṣaṇḍobā eventually emerged as a "parochialized" cult or perhaps even as an "aberrant" version of a Puranic Siva. He says, "One may with much more justification say, as we shall try to show, that there was also always the folk god called 'Rudra' in the Vedic texts (among other names, e.g. Sarva, Bhava, Pasupati), who lived on in cults like that of Kṣaṇḍobā or the related Mailara (Karnāṭaka) and Mallanna (Andhra). These cults existed parallel to the Rudra/Siva of the *Purāṇas* and of the Śaivite 'sects', which had their own peculiar mythology, ritual and philosophy. The Kṣaṇḍobā cult was linked to the scriptural "great tradi-

tion", as we see in the *Mallari Mahātmya*, but this link was late and superficial and failed to fully "universalize" the folk god Rudra-Kṣaṇḍobā and his cult." Sontheimer then proceeds to show how in the texts of the later Vedic period (the period of the *Atharvaveda*, the *Brahmaṇas*, and the *Srautasūtras*) we find Rudra reflected as a god who had to be integrated into the *srauta* sacrificial system, but it seems obvious that he belonged primarily to the *Vratyas* rather than to the Brahmanical sacrificial priest. The picture of Rudra as portrayed by Vedic texts shows a god on the whole unaffected by later interpretations. That is, we get evidence of a god who has not yet been dynamically interpreted by Puranic authors, "sectarians", classical poets and philosophers." (Emphases mine.) Sontheimer then leads us to the key concept that there was not "one unilinear historical development from a single Rudra to Siva, but... a more complex development of several distinct parallel traditions."

It is hardly possible to comment on such a rich collection of essays on inter-related themes which cumulatively present a comprehensive statement of the significance of a single folk deity. Sontheimer pursued Kṣaṇḍobā since fairly early in his research career. When he died, he was working on projects that would have further unfolded not only the encyclopaedic information that he had so assiduously gathered over several years, but also his key concept of the Kṣaṇḍobā cult as 'a mirror of Hinduism.' Sontheimer's presentation of Hinduism and its continuities within changes was not meant in any way to be a critique of classical Indology which is exclusively burdened by Brahmanism and its biases. But Sontheimer's essays have implications beyond his immediate scholarly focus. In an India where the legacy of Brahminism has spawned the political monster of Hindu fundamentalism, a more comprehensive model of Hinduism itself that highlights its hitherto neglected non-Brahmanical folk aspects may have some sobering impact on the ideologically prejudiced.

A striking feature of these essays is how they reflect Sontheimer's unique thought process. Most of the essays present original material researched and documented by the author himself. But how he links it with texts ranging from the Vedic and the Puranic and with the findings of other Indologists is the real treat. Some of the essays offer models of observation, collation, and presentation. My special favourites are *Daśarā at Devagūḍa* for its illuminating descriptive quality and *The Myth of the God and His Two Wives* for its striking presentation of oral material documented as a traditional 'text'—the

"In the case of Kṣaṇḍobā we find the same mutual mirroring of bhakta and God. For the merchants he is the Merchant; for the hunters he is the Hunter; animal imitations of the devotees reflect the manifestation of the god as an animal or as his favourite animal; for the hero he is the divine Hero. This mutual intimate relationship is reflected in folk literature as well as in folk rituals. For instance, it can be observed during the Dhangar shepherds' annual festival (kheḷ=play). This festival in honour of ancestors and gods takes place before the shepherds leave their monsoon camp for the annual migration (Sontheimer 1988: 109–30). At the end of the dance which brings ancestors and gods to life, the young Dhangar *devrusi* ("shaman") becomes possessed by Kṣaṇḍobā. He holds a spear—one of the characteristic weapons of Kṣaṇḍobā—, carries a heavy chain and rides on the shoulders of a friend as if he were a horse. The young man is an accepted *devrusi* who has been tested to see if the god truly takes possession of him. But before this test a special relationship had been formed between him and Kṣaṇḍobā. The Dhangar had broken his arm in an accident and during this liminal stage he had a vision of Kṣaṇḍobā. This is not just a case of somebody choosing a deity as his *istadevatā*, but the encounter was spontaneous and caused by a physically and emotionally painful experience. The individual relationship between devotee and god was later supplemented by the relationship between the Dhangar group and the god; the God became a *kuladaivat* after his "genuineness" and "presence" were tested by his taking possession of the Dhangar."

From *King of Hunters, Warriors and Shepherds*

Issues of Inclusion and Accommodation

George Mathew

PLURALISM, MINORITIES, NATIONAL INTEGRATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Edited by Abdulrahim P. Vijapur, Ajay Kumar Singh and Kumar Suresh

South Asian Publishers, Delhi, 1997, pp. 189, Rs. 260.00

Pluralism, minority rights, and national integration were central themes of India's freedom struggle. After Independence they assumed new dimensions within the concept of building a nation-state. In the early years of Independence the basic assumption was that people and political formations would accept pluralism as a positive factor in nation building, there would be no distinction between majority and minority and the Indian social integration would be a model for the rest of the world. After fifty years of freedom are we back to square one? Today we have a coalition government led by a political party which believes in "one country, one people, one culture". We must distinguish, however, between the 'one country' concept of the BJP and the 'one nation' theory in western democracies that takes plurality seriously. The party has front organizations which look negatively at the values of the freedom struggle and at the basic features of the Constitution. Furthermore, it sets its eyes on capturing power in Delhi, politically capitalizing on communal riots which tore apart the secular fabric of this country. The Bhagalpur riots of 1989 left about 1000 dead, Aligarh riots in December 1990 left 120 dead and the post-Babri demolition riots all over India saw 1200 dead and 4,000 injured. If we compare the 1989-1993 five year period with that of 1954-63, we find that during the latter nine year period only 344 persons lost their lives in com-

munal riots. Of course, at that time, we had a leader in Jawaharlal Nehru who said that "if any man raises his hand against another in the name of religion, I shall fight him till the last breath of my life whether I am in Government or outside".

Since the issues of majority, minority, homogenization and mixing of religion with politics have once again come to the fore, the book under review, *Pluralism, Minorities, National Integration: Problems and Prospects*, has contemporary relevance. It is edited by three young scholars working in political sociology. Their subjects of research for several years have been problems of pluralism, rights of minorities and issues affecting national integration. The book deals with questions of inclusion and accommodation in the context of religious pluralism in India, minority rights, empowerment of the scheduled castes and above all national integration in India. It also discusses the working of the National Integration Council.

Plurality in the post-modern period constitutes the theoretical framework for a discourse on religious pluralism. "The post-modernist and post-colonial theory, philosophy and approaches have rejected the validity of the paradigm of modernity and the basic tenets of modernism. Deconstruction of modernism has been [followed] by greater emphasis on multiplicity, plurality, heterogeneity, diversity and specificity. The shifting emphasis logically boils down to the post-modernist and post-colonial concern for pluralism" (p. 4). According to the authors, when post-modernism is institutionalized on a firm constitutional basis, pluralism moves to federalism. That is precisely why 'federalists' prefer federalism to pluralism. In Daniel J. Elazar's view, "pluralism in one form or another may indeed be a safeguard of liberty, but it cannot be relied upon by itself unless properly institutionalized constitutionally; and federalism differs from pluralism because it bases its efforts to deal with the realities of human nature on firm constitutional basis" (p.

While we have a Constitution which enshrines the best ideals of a modern, civilized society, another exclusivist model with "one's own community and hostility and antagonism towards the other" is fast developing. Tackling this should be everybody's concern. Unfortunately, the book has not gone beyond giving conventional academic answers.

8). Following this theoretical framework religious pluralism as a constructive model of accommodation based on equality and liberty and its manifestations in India is the central point of discussion by three authors. There is a big chasm between theory and practice. While we have a Constitution which enshrines the best ideals of a modern, civilized society, another exclusivist model with "one's own community and hostility and antagonism towards the other" is fast developing. Tackling this should be everybody's concern. Unfortunately, the book has not gone beyond giving conventional academic answers.

Developing a humanist culture transcending divisive religious and caste boundaries is one of the ways to effectively counter the problem. That can be achieved only through firm measures to establish an equitable society. An intensified struggle by the have-nots for their rights is an essential criterion. In other words, economic issues are critical for building healthy nationalism. Where poverty, inequality and feudalism persist, communal tensions prevail. The BIMARU states are the classic example of this trend. We have to bring in through discussion, debate, and writings the concepts of civil society for strengthening the state and polity in India. Unfortunately this focus has been lacking in our discourse. The civil society, independent of, but interdependent with the state has a crucial role to play in creating a situation of accommodation and toleration.

The minority communities can play a vital role of construction and creativity in a healthy civil society. The book touches upon this issue in passing. Minority rights in federal India are dealt with within the framework of human rights in this book. International human rights conventions and the Na-

According to the authors, when postmodernism is institutionalized on a firm constitutional basis, pluralism moves to federalism. That is precisely why 'federalists' prefer federalism to pluralism.

tional Commission for Minorities are well documented. The recent happenings in India—the turning point being the Babri Mosque incident—against minorities as well as the fundamentalists' (both Hindu and Muslim) attack on secular values, the media and minorities are well researched in the discussion. Abdulrahim P. Vijapur concludes that in spite of India's obligations, both national and international, to protect the rights of minorities its record is not satisfactory. The exceptions are its constitutional law and the judiciary. Policies and practices of the Central and State governments and actions of both majority and minority religions leave much to be desired as more often than not they are violative of the international norms and constitutional obligations. It may also be stated here that the republic in India provides an excellent field for all the players. The problem is that the players are not willing to stick to the rules of the game.

Two chapters are devoted to national integration in India. They dwell upon

the history and development of the concept and the problems of national integration. R.A. Schermerhorn's famous words on integration are pertinent here. For him integration of a society or state is "a continuing process rather than a state of being, relative rather than absolute, situational rather than all-embracing, corrective rather than self-subsistent, a matter of degree rather than an all-or-none phenomenon, and correlative with conflict rather than a displacement of conflict" (*Comparative Ethnic Relations: A Framework for Theory and Research*, p. 67). Therefore national integration has to be perceived as a dynamic process of harmonizing socio-cultural diversities (p. 95).

Of late there is less discussion of national integration as there is a dynamic process of social integration of people through interaction in employment nationwide, economic opportunities, spatial mobility, vibrant democracy at the Centre, state and now at the local levels. The nationhood is built up slowly but steadily. The separatist ten-

dencies in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir were the result of people feeling alienated from the nation. Temporarily they could be tackled through force and military intervention. But the lasting solution lies in emotional integration. Even today, when we visit some parts of the country, we hear people say, 'Oh you have come from India' or 'I am going to India'. Whenever sections of the Indian society feel alienated we go backwards on the road to national integration. Here the greatest responsibility lies with those who claim to belong to the majority community. Their goodwill and willingness to accept and coexist with diversity is the key to the whole issue, not domination and imposition of the will and whims of the majority. And the only answer to this problem is more secularism, more humanism and more equity and not exaggerated identities and boundaries of separation.

There are serious problems of national integration; some of them are identified by the authors and the book presents an in-depth discussion of these

problems. The question before everybody concerned with nation-building is how not to perpetuate them. And also how to tackle them with imagination and determination. Every Indian must be proud of his or her nation. For this to happen, India must address some of its basic problems, including its social, regional and sub-regional disparities. Unfortunately, the present day political leadership is going after non-priority issues like nuclearization or frivolous religious expressions. These are dangerous trends which will only accentuate the problems which the three authors through their research and theory building have set before us. This book should go beyond academic circles to generate debate on these issues which affect the life of the nation. Ignoring the signals can cost us dear. The recent history of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, USSR is still fresh in our memory.

George Mathew is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi.

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Home Thoughts from Abroad

H.Y. Sharada Prasad

ANANYA: A PORTRAIT OF INDIA

Edited by S.N. Sridhar and Nirmal K. Mattoo

The Association of Indians in America, New York, pp. 928, US \$ 79.95

The number of books that have been brought out to mark the fiftieth anniversary of our Independence must run into dozens. *Ananya* is one of the more impressive of them. It is a publication of the Association of Indians in America. The Indian community in the United States and Canada consists of more than a million people. As an American contributor to this volume, Professor Arthur W. Helweg, writes, "Indian immigrants are generally ranked as the ethnic community with the highest income and education in the United States. More importantly their contributions culturally, economically and politically as individuals have been substantial. As a community, they have enriched American culture, brought technological innovation, appreciably contributed to the international base of the US and increased US economic wealth. At the same time, India has also benefited economically, politically and socially from her Diaspora." They may have a little and big dissatisfactions with the slow-moving ways of the mother country, but they spring to its defence, proud of its cultural wealth and continue to be emotionally involved with it. We here refer to them as NRIs, as Shashi Tharoor has remarked elsewhere, the expression might well be expanded into "Never Relinquished Indians". This book is an act of homage on the part of these expatriate children who carry India in their hearts. It is a big, bulky book of more than 900 pages. The editors, Professor S.N. Sridhar and Dr. Nirmal K. Mattoo, explain in an Introduction that their aim is not to present a balance sheet of the Indian civilization. To quote their own words: "It has probably never been more important for the world to know about India than now. ... India, with its 920 million people, is the second most populous nation on earth; the fifth largest economy; a Big Emerging market with a middle class consumer base of 400 million people; and the world's fastest democracy. ... Above all India presents a grand experiment crucial to humanity's future in participatory democracy, secularism, multi-

culturalism, affirmative action, and ecologically viable development, to name only a few. ...

"Most of us often wished we could read, and recommend to our relations, friends, neighbours and business associates, a reliable and readable book which would be a broad introduction to India for the general reader, without being tangled in technicalities or irritating overgeneralization."

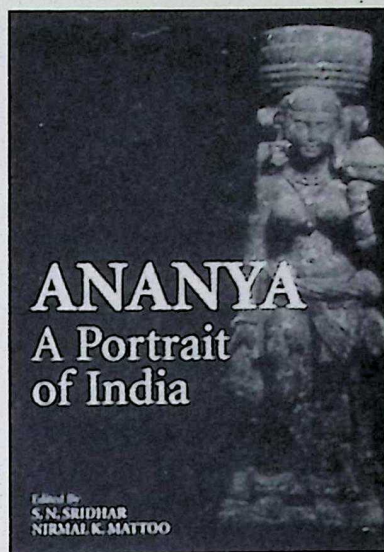
The result is *Ananya*. The word, the editors point out, means "like no other", "incomparable", "unique"; then they add as a modifier, "Every country is *ananya* in its own way. Our goal has been to convey in some measure the ways in which India is *ananya*."

The Introduction is followed by 39 essays and an epilogue. The essays are grouped under ten themes:

Historical Background; Indic Religions and Philosophy; Society and Politics; Science and Technology; Business and Economics; Arts and Architecture; Language and Literature; Performing Arts; Makers of Modern India; and Identity and Diaspora.

One would have thought that all the contributors would be eminent scholars from the Indian community in America or by old India hands in the American academic institutions or media; but nearly half have been secured from back home. The essays on the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*, luminous for their quality, are both from the late Professor M. Hiriyanna written more than sixty years ago. Girish Karnad's essay on the theatre was originally written for *Daedalus* eight years ago. Anantha Murthy's essay on the novel is from a paper presented in Chicago University in 1986.

An anthology should not be judged by who wrote the pieces and when but by how good they are. A high proportion of the essays in this book pass that test. Particularly notable are Professor T.N. Srinivasan's "Indian Economy over Five Millennia", Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's "The Colonial Impact on India", and Professor Robert L. Hargraves' "Dilemma of Democracy in India". It is not easy to sum up in thirty-five pages the country's economic experience from the days of the Harappan civilization to the eco-



nomie reforms initiated by the Narsimha Rao government. But Professor Srinivasan has done it with aplomb. An interesting nugget from the essay is a quotation from Professor P.C. Mahalanobis on the pernicious impact of trade unionism on our post-Independence development effort. Imagine the guru of the Leftists saying: "In India labour laws are probably the most highly protective of labour interest in the narrowest sense in the whole world. There is practically no link between output and remuneration." The essay on trade and finance in ancient India bears the mark of Mr. Prakash Tandon's vast knowledge and elegance of style.

Professor Hargraves combines congratulation with caution. While conceding that India's democratic institutions have been remarkably successful in accommodating cultural diversity and that our federalism has managed, albeit imperfectly, to compartmentalize conflict, he warns that the ghosts of linguistic and ethnic separatism have by no means been laid. The mischief potential in Punjab, Kashmir and the North-East should not be underrated. Nor the divisive consequences of caste reservations and the dangers posed by the reinventing of a "muscular Hinduism". The task of reconciling majority and minority aspirations will remain an ever-present challenge in a country of India's ethnic and regional diversity.

The section "Makers of Modern India" deals with only Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Professor C.D. Narsimaiah has contributed very readable papers on "Gandhi and the West" and "Jawaharlal Nehru's Sense of History". In the former, he sums up the role played by three western authors, Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy, in the evolution of Gandhi's philosophy of life. The last sentence of the essay gives an idea of Professor Narsimaiah's own

historical perceptiveness: "Millions of educated Indians have only been at the receiving end of western thought, while a man like Gandhi, because he could respond from the deep well of Indian wisdom, he alone could travel farther than did the millions and enrich mankind's heritage—and enrich even those from whom he received the stimulus."

It would have been useful if the section had also acquainted the readers with the life and work of some other great figures of our time who made decisive contributions to the making of India, like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Subhas Bose, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, B.R. Ambedkar and Jayaprakash Narayan.

A short epilogue has been contributed by Dr. V.S. Arunachalam, former Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister who has since migrated to the United States. He refers to the vast advances made in science and technology under the impetus of Nehru and Indira Gandhi and the problems that still baffle the country. "There is a lingering feeling among many of us", he remarks, "that technology should have served us better. The quality of life of our people should have improved further, the country should have been better off, and India should have become an attractive place to live. Strategically, the country should have been seen to be stronger without evoking doubts or concerns from others." The fault, according to him, is that we have neglected the all-important task of eradication of illiteracy. "The technology engine works efficiently only when people are better educated. A smaller number of Ph.Ds or B.Es would not matter as (much as) a very large number of high school graduates." Arunachalam recommends to us a new Tryst with Technology based on a strategy of total literacy to take forward and complete Jawaharlal Nehru's Tryst with Destiny.

The book is elegantly printed. The typeface is attractive and the spacing liberal. Composing errors are not too many. The articles pass the test the editors had set for themselves, of being reliable and readable. But the reviewer had one difficulty—the book's bulk. It is too heavy to hold in the hand. The publishers ought to have brought it out in two volumes. We are told by the editors that a companion volume will follow, which will be devoted to regional cultures and crafts. They should ensure that the illustrations are laid out and printed more attractively in that volume.

H.Y. Sharada Prasad is a former Information Advisor to the Prime Minister and has translated a couple of books into English.

Interrogative Quest of the Individual Intellect

C. Uday Bhaskar

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

Edited by Rukmini Sekhar

SPIC-MACAY, 1998, pp. 182 with illustrations, Rs. 600.00

August 1998 marks the end of the year long 50th anniversary focus for India and there is little doubt that it has been more of an introspective year than a celebratory one for a variety of reasons. At the 50 year punctuation, the Indian glass is a typical case of being half-full and while the achievements as a unified state and consolidation attained as a nation are commendable—given the adversities that had to be overcome—the empty spectrum of the glass has predictably aroused considerable reflection across the board in the subcontinent.

The volume under review is part of this 50th anniversary effort and is a joint project of SPIC-MACAY, the well-known cultural organization that has rendered yeoman service in taking Indian culture, music and dance to the younger generation in their schools, colleges and universities, and FURI—the Dalai Lama inspired Foundation for Universal Responsibility. The target audience is the youth of India and seven issues have been identified for exploration—universal responsibility and nonviolence, pluralism, governance, gender, development, education and

sacred India by a team of academics and professionals from different disciplines. Part of a larger project of SPIC-MACAY that involves films on these seven themes and an integrated campus outreach program, the book itself serves as a curtain-raiser of events that will unspool in the months ahead.

It is an ambitious scope and in attempting "to contextualize the celebrating of nationhood in a civilizational framework" the editor notes that this collection of fourteen essays makes "a quiet, yet determined foray into the realm of the intellect in order to fulfil the primary objective of this volume—namely to arrive at a state of reason." As Paul Brunton reminds the reader, in the final analysis, "the intellect must look for its originator" and this collection provides the catalyst for such a quest—if the individual is willing to take the first step. A collection of essays will perforce have a sense of diversity in terms of both form and content and this volume is no exception. Some of the articles/essays have appeared elsewhere before but this does not detract from the overall package that ranges from short pithy comments to a more reflective yet rigorous seventeen page essay with 31 end notes by Ashis Nandy on "Pluralism as the Politics of Cultural Diversity in India." Nandy needs little introduction to his peer group and the intelligentsia who have been following his significant body of writings—pushing the envelope of conventional thinking, as it were on a range of socio-political and cultural issues and his longish essay is the kind of stimulus that recommends this collection to the youth of India. How many times have we got heard the cliché that India is a unique case of unity in diversity and that the "secular" model is the only hope for the state to survive the vicissitudes of sectarian compulsions in the years ahead? However reality is different and the prevailing division of the average Indian according to every conceivable form of classification—religion, language, caste, ethnicity, gender et al is case in point.

At the 50 year punctuation, the Indian glass is a typical case of being half-full and while the achievements as a unified state and consolidation attained as a nation are commendable—given the adversities that had to be overcome—the empty spectrum of the glass has predictably aroused considerable reflection across the board in the subcontinent.

tion—religion, language, caste, ethnicity, gender et al is case in point. The rationalization is provided admirably by Nandy whom I would unhesitatingly recommend to the younger generation in India (Pakistan?) and abroad grappling with many contradictions—particularly the so-called ABCDs, the America Born Confused Desis, as one has heard the expression being used.

One may be indulged for quoting the author in toto when he points out that: "After fifty years, it is time to admit that the country has survived this plurality not by the standard means developed and honed in the dominant political cultures of the world—creating a 'melting pot' where people leave their diversities behind and interact as individual citizens having specified rights and obligations. Despite popular slogans such as 'We are Indians first, Hindus and Muslims second', Indian politics, we know, not only depends heavily on primordial loyalties of caste and communities, but also uses these loyalties for virtually every kind of mobilization effort. The dreams with which Indian modernists have lived for the last 150 odd years have been shredded by the live dynamics of Indian politics."

Quite fortuitously Nandy in his exploration of the plural self is addressing the very audience of SPIC-MACAY—the Indian modernists with western education and upbringing who exude a sincere urge to get back to their cultural roots between the elusive quest for prosperity, dignity and identity sandwiched in MNC jobs and modern day sweat shops within the subcontinent and GRE/SAT and green cards/glass ceilings in the Diaspora. One hopes that contributions of this nature will encourage the younger mind to question conventional wisdom—especially that received as part of a dominant narrative and embark on this interrogative quest of the individual intellect—the leit-motif of the volume.

It may not be possible to identify

individual authors in an eclectic collection of this nature but the central theme is one that provides considerable ground for the fertile and inquisitive mind. Thus whether it is Tanika Sarkar asking of feminine discourse, "have we moved ahead at all, or are we running around in circles, rooted to the same spot? There is no easy answer..." or Leela Samson on the post-reactionary phase of feminism cautioning that "History and manipulation warps or controls thinking... feminists tend to curl up in concentric circles, keeping out 'other women and all men'—there are multiple strands that warrant much greater scrutiny by the reader.

Any reference to the Indian ethos—be it civilization, culture or art must necessarily invoke the "sacred" and the "spiritual" and here Kapila Vatsyayan and Makarand Paranjpe provide useful filters to review the current state-of-the-art in more ways than one. While Paranjpe's evocative essay links the sacred and the secular the spiritual and the political—drawing from Gandhi's writings and the Upanishads, Kapila Vatsyayan complements this section with characteristic panache. Reflecting on whether Indian art is sensuous or spiritual—body or soul?—she draws a distinction between facile classifications and interpretations now in vogue as for instance the popular association of the word *shringara*. It is clarified that this crucial word used so often in Indian art signifies neither "decoration nor make-up" but "the enlivening of the body with breath (*prana*) through the senses so that love at its most selfless and purest is communicated." The revival of interest in Indian dance and music is welcome but must not be anchored on misleading assumptions about the erotic or the sensuous and as Vatsyayan adds—to my mind relevantly—in the current fervour to teach the younger generation in a plethora of dance and music schools/academies scattered through the country: "Without the sense of the sacred through a disciplined celebration of life and the senses is one matter, to titillate the senses through the use of undisciplined movement is quite another. Can we pause, albeit for a moment, to reflect upon how we are desecrating both the body and the senses? Is this not pollution of the worst kind?"

Other authors who embellish the collection include Dilip Simeon on ahimsa, Akeel Bilgrami on minority rights in a pluralistic democracy in an essay that draws on Ambedkar, Raghava Menon on the educational predicament, S. Anandalakshmy on educating the whole person, Rajeev Bhargava and Niraja Gopal Jayal on the

Exchanging Literatures

K. Satchidanandan

LIVING LITERATURE: A TRILINGUAL DOCUMENTATION OF INDO-GERMAN LITERARY EXCHANGE

Edited by Barbara Lotz and Vishnu Khare

Vani Prakashan, New Delhi, 1998, pp. xxii+390, Rs. 495.00

Cover: grim, uninviting—with forty-one faces in varying moods, from the melancholic and the meditative to the exuberant and baffled, one could mistake this oversized book for a dictionary of biography. Contents: uneven, as it can be in the case of an unplanned anthology, yet substantial. German literature is represented by some of the finest writers of the century, living and dead: Paul Celan, Bertolt Brecht, Gottfried Benn, Gunter Grass, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Sarah Kirsch, Erich Fried. . . The Indian list too is not without outstanding names like U.R. Anantha Murthy, Dilip Chitre, Nirmal Verma, Krishna Sobti, K.B. Vaid, Kunwar Narain and others, only it is diluted by the inclusion of several mediocre writers.

An assessment of the linguistic geography of the anthology can be revealing. The southern and western languages are represented by one writer each from Kannada and Marathi respectively; the eastern languages by two, one Oriya and one Bengali. Of the northern, Hindi gets the lion's share, more than its due (eighteen out of a total of twenty-nine Indian writers in the collection are Hindi writers); Urdu, Himachali and Dogri each get one while Punjabi has three. A good majority of these writers live and work in Delhi—or frequent Delhi—and it is this convenience, and not choice, that has obviously and understandably prompted the organizers to invite them to Max Mueller Bhavan to read from their work—this anthology is a compilation of the pieces thus read.

One may well interrogate the propriety of bringing in statistics while discussing a work that belongs more to the realm of poetics. However, it is difficult not to be concerned with the politics of cultural exchange where the same language and the same names are in constant circulation. Just look at the major literatures gone unrepresented here: Gujarati, Manipuri, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam. And the grossly underrepresented ones: Marathi, Urdu, Oriya, Bengali, English. My friend Barbara Lotz, the co-editor of the volume spares no pains to explain the neglect of the South—though it is not only the South as one can see from the above

observations—in her well-written introduction (the other introduction is by Vishnu Khare her co-editor) and I have no doubts about the good intentions of Lothar Lutze, that great lover of Indian, especially Hindi, literature as well as Barbara Lotz. These inequalities are only a reflection of certain social phenomena beyond their control—the concentration of writers in the capital, their aggressiveness and feeling of self-importance, the consequent marginalization of provincial talents, the unevenness of media attention. A mediocre writer in Delhi inevitably gets more highly rated and more widely publicized than an excellent writer in a village in Bihar or Madhya Pradesh, let alone in the remote South. And it takes courage and wisdom to realize this and look beyond. But when our own organizations fall prey to the metropolitan megalomania we have little reason to blame agencies from other lands for being unfair. This is, after all, a hand extended in love; let me take off my gloves.

The Indian section that occupies the major part of the anthology features seven fiction writers and twenty-two poets. Their pieces are presented in the original language with German and English translations. For the purpose of the review I depend solely on the English versions though I have also gone through the originals in Hindi—the only other language in this collection I follow well. The extract from Manzoor Ahtesham's Urdu novel reveals an experimental fiction writer attempting a metanovel. The author's sense of humour and the play of his imagination have come through very well in Kuldip Singh's careful translation. Here is a sample:

"In point of fact 'Lapata Bhopali' is a white ant feeding on the waste of my being, my soul. In him regrets rather than love burn bright. He is not interested in that which 'remains', for it is there; whereas he is saddened by that which is 'no more' because it cannot be regained. In simpler words, he is one of those who, even while living in concrete houses refuse not to dream of their shacks pulled down to make way for those houses.



... 'Lapata' has written a couplet about himself. 'My being is a conglomerate of other beings, my ribs a boat. The heart is Mecca and pain Medina'. To say anything more will be like holding a candle to the sun."

U.R. Anantha Murthy's 'A Horse for the Sun' (*Soorynakudirai*) is easily one of the best short stories of modern Indian literature, with its unusual narrative structure tapering on to pure poetry, its insight into the rural milieu, its mockery of the bookish middle class intellectual totally alienated from ground realities and its superb style and craftsmanship. English cannot hope to capture the tonal qualities of Kannada that are so important to the story especially towards the end where it assumes the quality of a mantra. German with its links with Sanskrit sounds better. This story, though a bit long could have been published in full; here the reader gets only an excerpt.

Satyen Kumar's story—again excerpted—of a seemingly elder girl seducing a boy in romantic circumstances is plain ordinary. But the reader is immediately compensated by an excerpt from Uday Prakash's 'Chhappan Tole Ka Kardhan' ('The Golden Waist-Chain' as translated here: who cares how much it weighed) that tells the symbolic tale of a bird-loving grandfather whose act of defiance—asking the British officer not to shoot his ducks—drives him out of the village into the legend. Before Independence he could stop a moving train-engine all by himself and push it back for miles, but after Independence, he couldn't lift even a *lota* (a small brasspot) and his grandchildren, children of the midnight, even while young, couldn't lift it either—a metaphor for the frailty and cowardice of the post-independence generation. Uday Prakash is easily one of the most subtle and responsible story writers now in Hindi: even this story, which is not his

best, testifies to this. What follows is an excerpt from Krishna Sobti's *Mitro Marjani*, that little masterpiece portraying Mitro the defiant woman, the very embodiment of freedom and desire, who shocks the conservative establishment with her uninhibited behaviour. Krishna Baldev Vaid's short story *Andhere Ki Atma* (The Soul of Darkness) is reproduced in full. Though brief the story is typical of Vaid's style of speaking through symbols and metaphors: here is a man confronting the growing darkness of a narrow dungeon in his own house: this darkness may be an unconscious fear, an area of ignorance, a growing amnesia, a past experience of guilt, or suppressed Desire. Provoked it beats him up like a hidden ghost, yet the man recounts the blows with masochistic joy. Nirmal Verma's piece—an extract from *London Ki Ek Raat* (A Night in London)—is full of drama though hardly representative despite its revelations about racism in London.

The poetry section is richer. It begins with Kumar Ambuj's poems, two of them rather poorly translated into English by Ashutosh Dubey with awkward lines like "She will . . . serve me food and insist that I must have little more the way the mothers can do. . . She'll see the decline of the body she had created herself" or "Much life remains a little time". But the poems have just enough strength to survive these (*Akashmat ek Din*, strangely translated as *Mother will Arrive*) onslaughts. Even Vishnu Khare, a fine translator of poetry into Hindi, sounds at times wearisome

Bunches of yellow flowers, here and there. Green leaves. I examined them, leaf by leaf. Curious as to what his gaze was aimed at, I closely scrutinized everything that fell within my view. Then I saw it: a sun's horse. Seeing this innocent friend of mine watch with such rapture this insect with its raised crooked legs, a light body, a green geometrical angular *ashtavakra* form, I was amused for a moment. But only for a moment. The sun's horse sprang; and as it sprang, Venkata's intent head with its crop of hair sprang with it in sympathy. I felt happy. Venkata turned around and, looking at me, said with such innocent ecstasy: "The sun's horse. Æ My eyes looked into those wonder-struck eyes of his that had seen the sun's horse and my mouth fell open: "The sun's horse" I said.

From U.R. Ananthamurthy's 'A Horse for the Sun' (Translated from Kannada by Manu Shetty and A.K. Ramanujan)

in English, as when he translates a simple line from Sanjay Chaturvedi's *Lutere bankar Itihas* like *Na jaane kya hoga is shahar mein* as 'What happenings will be witnessed in this city?' Sanjay Chaturvedi seems to belong to Raghuvir Sahay's clan and like many less talented poets who followed him ends up being a little verbose. The economy of the earlier poem gives way to rhetoric in *Paise ke Daant* (The Fangs of Money). Shaista Anwar's poems are the very opposite and prove that subjective poetry too can be flat.

Dilip Chitre's poems are uncompromisingly modern in perception as he shows us the sights the blind see: "The blind one's skin can see. The coarse primeval surface of the world. In the palms of the blind one's hand unfold/Vistas/Like man and woman//Separate yet coupled/Alone together." (Sights the Blind View) The feelings become more self-consciously Indian in his poem in English where he remembers the house of his childhood "all its furniture gone/Except my grandmother's grindstone/And the brass figurines of her gods." He feels like "an elderly infant" exploring "the rooms of age" as he toddles around the empty house while his grandmother's voice "shivers on a bare branch". Listening to the fourth Brandenburg concerto (*Chautha Brandenburg Kancheritho*) he sees flocks of birds spread over the canvas of his hearing while "morning becomes a warbling of countless colours and tones". This vision, "of life springing and flowing out of millions of mouths" convinces him of God's existence. Music becomes "the primordial language spreading underneath speech", man's mother tongue, if one may say so. Manglesh Dabral, as sensitive a poet as ever, is precise in his image, a precision made even more perfect in Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's translation as when *roshniyan raakh ho chukee hain* becomes 'the lights are ash' in English, or 'kithne saare patte udkar aathe hain chehre par mere bachpan ke pedon se' turns into the crisper 'The leaves that settle on my face/Fall from my childhood trees'. (*Patton ki Mrityu*: The Death of Leaves). I have always liked Manglesh's poems for their element of wonderment, their dreamy quality exemplified also by the poems in this selection like *Sapna* (Dream) *Kuch der Keliye* (For a while) and *Shahar* (City). 'City' sums up the experience of a whole cross section of urban society: "I looked at the city/and smiled/and walked in/Who would ever want to live here/I wondered/and never went back."

Alokeranjan Dasgupta's poems are typically urban. The stamp of the expatriate is evident. Nida Fazli's Urdu po-

ems betray the cynicism of the city-dweller: "The current of the convulsing crowds/Has a speed too fast/Nobody looks at nobody here/No friendship/No love/No philosophy. . . (On the Road) or "Just keep on living like this/Say nothing/. . . Be thankful you are safe. . ." (Just keep on Living). Gagan Gill's *Majhali* (The Fish) expresses an asphyxiating longing for freedom; the fish trapped in water with the sky in its brain becomes a metaphor of unfreedom stung by desire. Her *Aadhe Sir Ka Dard* (translated as a pale 'Migraine') is a poem on the verge of the metaphysical: the head aches when there is a mound of dry grief inside the skull that God tries to discover by letting the river of blood swell and touch it. "This is an insistence/between body and soul/between soul and the creator of its grief/ to puncture the blister/hidden in a corner." *Kisee Doosare Ka Prem* (Somebody Else's Love) speaks of drifting love: we leave our own love behind someone else's door while sometimes somebody else's love drifts into our lives until someone comes looking for it and takes it away. Pramod Kaunswal has obviously misunderstood bare description for poetry and progressivist attitude as a matter entirely of theme; both his poems leave the reader cold. Vishnu Khare is the master of the long line and his poems border on the narrative as is the case with both of his poems appearing here. If the former is like a chant invoking the bygone days and the lost relatives who might have peopled his cityhouse and turned it into a house, the latter fills a game of cricket with the mystery of a vague presence turning it into a game of life and death.

The three pieces by the Oriya poet Sitakant Mahapatra are his most frequently anthologized ones, 'Dhangda's Love Song', 'Time Does not Fly' and 'The Wind'. When he is good, Sitakant Mahapatra expresses a sense of the transient nature of life and things: "It is not time that flies. /It is men, all creatures/everywhere." ('Time Does not Fly'). At times he grows romantic as in Dhangda's song of love or concretizes the abstract in the form of sculpted images as in 'The Wind'. He recollects the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 with intense bitterness to find out that 'history is the conflict between identities'. The same pain also informs his 'Dialogue' where silence alone makes life bearable. Kunwar Narayan's forte is irony as when he observes, 'In a world crammed with spectators/balancing while acting the clown's role/in good faith/was the greatest feat of all' (Circus) or when he bemoans the transformation of Rama's empire into a disputed site and Rama himself into an election symbol while

unreason looms large with a thousand heads and hands driving him back to the pages of the Puranas: "Our jungle are not those of days of yore when roamed Valmiki." 'Clarification' demythifies the context of the Gita, Arjuna asking Krishna for an explanation, and places it in the broader context of life and history: we too can delay at least for a while, say 'No' to it and ask God for a clarification. It is Arjuna the doubter that saves the world, and not Arjuna the fighter.

Surjeet Patar, perhaps the most outstanding Punjabi poet of the second generation—after Harbhajan Singh—Amrita Pritam—wonders at the metamorphosis of lambs into wolves and wolves into lambs in the compartment of a train (*An Animal Tale*). And in crisp, almost Brechtian piece he writes, "I walk just two or three steps/and find myself in an alien land./How small are the shadows/ of the trees/planted to me". In a dialogue between two trees one tree asks the other "Would you construct a scaffold out of me or a musical instrument, Sir?" The newspapers have only fallen leaves in them; the books have only seeds, though are full of axe-marks, only prison fill the dreams. Patar's poems thus become oblique comments on the grim human and political situation in the country, especially in the Punjab. Prayag Shukla sums up the act of writing: "What we vivid is behind me. /What is ahead moves back. /Yet here I sit, /and this write:/it lives". His poem on Delhi springs from that love-hate that the city invokes in most of its inhabitants: "Even in Delhi, cuckoos call/ Leaves fall. Ants crawl up the tree. . . Even in Delhi, Rise the stars. Even in Delhi/The butterfly darts." The poet tries to come to terms with the city by discovering the village within it.

Kedarnath Singh is one of the few Hindi poets who still retain the magic of language while the majority in their attempt to liberate poetry from romanticism have abandoned poetic imagination itself: post-Raghuvir Sahay poetry is mostly skin and bones. 'Reading a Love Poem' brings a poem alive where every line enacts the meanings of its words. The reader looking for ducks in the poems encounters only a woman waiting for a bus, a woman cutting up potatoes, a teak tree casting a strange dread over the poem. . . the lines fill with light, shade, odours, colours, voices and movements as we move forward. As the lines end, the woman stands outside the poem breaking it apart. 'Benaras', one of Kedarnath Singh's most discussed poems, unfolds the mystery of the holy city—also the poet's birth place—in vivid and striking images. Everything is dreamy here.

A Rich Heritage

Partho Datta

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF NORTH INDIA: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PORTRAITS BY BALTAZARD SOLVYNS

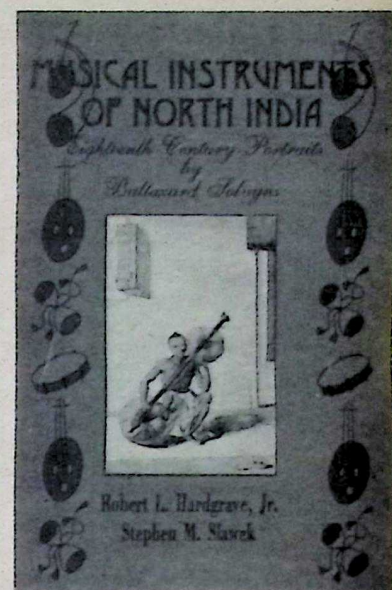
By Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. and Stephen M. Slawek

Manohar Publications, 1997, pp. 153, Rs. 475.00

KHYAL: CREATIVITY WITHIN NORTH INDIA'S CLASSICAL MUSIC TRADITION

By Bonnie C. Wade

Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997, pp. 314, Rs. 650.00 (with audio cassette)



Baltazard Solvyns is perhaps not as well known as his fellow travelling artists like the Daniells whose works have been best sellers since the late eighteenth century. Recently a Daniell painting sold for many thousand pounds at an auction at Sotheby's in London which only proves the enduring value of these quaint picturesque views even today. The Daniells literally produced hundreds of works which embraced many mediums (etchings, drawings oils etc.) and is probably one of the reasons why their reproductions are still circulating in the market today. Solvyns on the other hand successively produced various large tomes beginning in 1794 from Calcutta with *A Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings: Descriptive of the Manners, Customs and Dresses of the Hindoos* and culminating in the four elephantine volumes of *Les Hindous* published from Paris between 1808 and 1812. Not surprisingly they had limited circulation and fame, their girth, size and price keeping it out of reach of amateur enthusiasts and limiting its acquisition only to wealthy collectors and libraries.

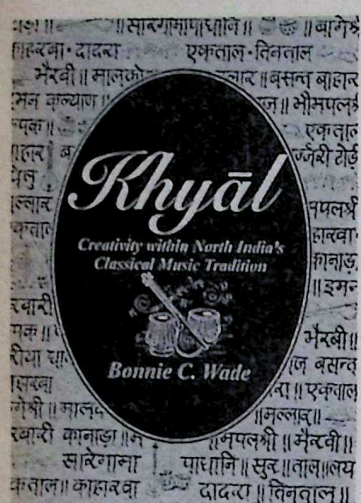
Unlike the Daniells, Solvyns' etchings of the 'manners, customs and dresses' do not make exciting drawing room prints. Solvyns was a sharp observer yet his portrayal of Indians is rather dull and stereotypical. As the editors say in their introduction, Solvyns 'approached his task as an ethnographer, drawing his subjects from life and with more concern for accuracy than aesthetics'. Although he drew Calcutta's "Blacktown" (i.e. the Indian settlements to the north), there are few identifiable locations in his album. This is the crucial difference with artists like the Daniells whose works

while abounding in landscapes and monuments were very often completely devoid of people. At this point I just can't help preening about the fact that I must be one of the lucky few to have actually seen the Solvyns volumes in the original. These volumes are in the collection of the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta and must have been acquired when Lord Curzon decided to build a memorial to his favourite queen and collect all that was 'beneficent and good about the Raj' under one roof. Curzon's perspicacity it seems only worked for India's past, he had notoriously reactionary views on Indian nationalism, and his reputation has since eclipsed. But his collection at the Memorial survives in mint condition today. That it does is a tribute to the farsightedness of the late Nisith R. Ray, doyen of Calcutta historians and director of the Memorial in the 1960s, who ensured that fragile and rare printed works were kept in special airconditioned vaults to save them from the humid weather of the city. Admittedly entrance to these vaults is marred now by red-tapism and bureaucratic suspicion, but once past these hurdles the enthusiast will be delighted to see how well the Solvyns volumes have survived. It is a pity that the original binding of these volumes cannot be seen any longer. In 1990 during the Calcutta tercentenary, a special gallery paying tribute to the city was opened in the Memorial and individual plates were removed from the Solvyns volumes and framed and hung separately as examples of contemporary art from the late eighteenth century. At least it has made accessible to the general public some examples of Solvyns' craft.

Solvyns as the editors inform us was born in Antwerp in 1760 and originally started as a 'marine painter' (presum-

ably someone who accompanied trading voyages to the Orient). Political unrest in Europe drove him to find his fortune in India, where other artists like Thomas Hodges, the Daniells and portrait painters like Tilly Kettle, Thomas Hickey and John Zofanny were already trying to win, 'the patronage of nabobs and nawabs alike'. Solvyns landed in Calcutta in 1791 and sensibly decided to earn his living as a sort of journeyman artist, restoring paintings, providing decorations etc. since his talents in either landscape or portraiture were rather inadequate compared to his contemporaries. But clearly he had other large projects in mind. In 1794 inspired by the "Asiatick Researches" of William Jones he set out to record in detail the daily life and professions of "Hindoos". In 1804 he left India for France where he married into money which enabled him to publish the volumes he is best known for and admired today.

The editors have made a selection from the various Solvyns volumes and chosen the plates which show North Indian musical instruments. They have reproduced the original English commentary (Solvyns had also provided a text in French) with extensive comments and annotations of their own. One can't but admire the diligent scholarship of the editors. They have carefully scoured all the available material on these instruments and have established their historicity carefully. Since Solvyns worked in Calcutta there is a profusion of instruments local to East India. Bengalis for instance will recognize the *dholak*, *dhol*, *khol* and *kasar*. The *sitar*, *sarangi*, *tabla*, *pakhawaj*, *tabla*, *bin* and *tanpura* are familiar to all who are acquainted with Hindustani classical music. Many instruments (like the



pinak) have fallen in disuse today though the impression generally is of remarkable continuity and development. There are also two fascinating sections on the Nautch. Solvyns' commentary is sometimes intemperate, but he is reasonably accurate and his illustrations are an invaluable record of the way instruments were built and played almost two hundred years ago.

It is a little mystifying that the editors, Robert Hardgrave (who is well known for his classic study *The Nadars of Tamilnad*) and Stephen Slawek (professor of ethnomusicology) have strictly restricted their role as annotators only. There is plenty of evidence in the texts that they reproduce to hazard some large scale generalizations. I am particularly struck by the fact that there is no attempt at drawing on Edward Said's *Orientalism*. It is true that ever since the blistering critiques of Aijaz Ahmed and Sumit Sarkar, scholars have been a little wary of treading the well-worn path of Orientalist conspiracies. But anybody who has read Said's magnificent chapter on Napoleon's textual colonization of Egypt will not fail to notice certain similarities. There is no doubt that modern colonial exploitation went hand in hand with the massive production of systematic data on the colonized. Said has remarked that *Description de l'Egypte* was literally a "large" project, not just in the amount of information collected but also in the printed size of the individual folios. There is too much affinity here with Solvyns to pass unnoticed, especially since his work is contemporaneous with the rule of Lord Wellesley, British India's first modernizer whose town planning schemes for Calcutta unleashed not dissimilar discourses. But this connection seems to have eluded the editors. Secondly it's a pity that although they liken Solvyns' work to that of a modern ethnographer, they do little to establish the links between co-

lonialism and anthropology. There is no doubt that Solvyns' tomes form an important precedent to precisely this kind of connection. Thirdly the editors mention in passing that Solvyns was categorical that his work dealt only with Hindus for he did not fail to make clear his contempt for Muslims in general. Here then is another quality of Orientalism, which made it so attractive to early nationalists forever in a hurry to forget their Islamic past. Did Solvyns anticipate the likes of Max Mueller? This tantalizing question immediately comes to mind. Certainly their attempt to capture the East within standardized volumes does not seem dissimilar although they specialized in different cultural fields. But the editors it seem fight shy of such questions.

Bonnie C. Wade's *Khyāl* was originally published in 1984 by Cambridge University Press in its prestigious ethnomusicology series. This work of meticulous empiricism which recalls once again the great works of nineteenth century scholar-ethnographers, goes over the history of the primary vocal genre in North Indian classical music and constructs a narrative of enviable lucidity. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande, the great scholar-musician whose own efforts at textualization in the early decades of this century was not dissimilar would have been immensely pleased with Wade's work. But there is an irony about its publishing history. CUP's price for the book when converted to Indian currency worked out to more than 2000 rupees. Thus despite making so much effort at chronicling the history of *khyāl* the author effectively ensured that nobody would be able to read her book in India. Now fourteen years after its first publication an Indian reprint has finally seen the light of the day thanks to the enterprise of a Delhi publisher specializing in Orientalia.

The burden of this book is devoted to explicating the style or *gayaki* of the six main lineages or *gharanas* in Hindustani vocal music. The *gharanas* discussed are Gwalior, Agra, Sahaswan/Rampur, Jaipur/Atrauli which the author insists on calling Alladiya Khan (by the founder's name), Kirana and Patiala. Each of these are discussed separately in individual chapters. A concluding chapter discusses vocalists who do not fit easily within the bounds of the *gharana* system because of their marked individuality. Besides this the book is also prefaced by two extremely useful chapters which fill in the historical background and delineate the main characteristics that distinguish *khyāl* as a genre of vocal music. Thus for instance separate sec-

tions are devoted to explaining *alap*, *ciz*, *bolbant*, *boltan*, *tan* etc. Definitions are supported by notations and short examples are provided in the accompanying audio cassette. People who are unfamiliar with *khyāl*, or the new enthusiast who is in search of an authentic introduction will benefit immensely from these. At this point it is well worth mentioning that while similar introductions abound in Indian languages, in English it was pioneered by Peggy Holroyd whose *Music of India* published in 1972 (with a preface by sitar maestro Ravi Shankar) has a whole section called 'Memoria Technica' which is not dissimilar from what Wade has tried to do. It is a pity therefore that this book does not merit a mention in her bibliography. But there is need for some caution here for no amount of wisdom on grammar or technique is likely to endear classical music to anybody all the same such efforts remain praiseworthy.

The already converted will needless to say straightaway proceed to the individual accounts of the *gharanas* in Wade's book. These are roughly divided into three sections. The first two are a detailed history of the *gharana* and individual artistes, and Wade has taken immense pains to also construct the family and musical lineages of every *gharana*. The real strength of the book I feel lies here. Wade has literally left no stone unturned in her quest to gather valuable information for these sections. She has consulted every book, essay, stray reference (in at least three languages) and interviewed all the major figures, collated and cross-checked the information available and tried to arrive at a reasonable picture for the past. This is not an easy job. Most of the historical material on Hindustani classical music is a mix of anecdote, apocrypha and fact and it needs patience and perseverance to disentangle one from the other. Wade's herculean effort is therefore more than just commendable. Honourable mention though must be made in this context of S.K. Chaubey's *Sangeet Ke Gharanon ki Charcha* in Hindi (1977) and the family and musical lineages compiled by Jayantakumar Mukhopadhyay appended to Bimlakanta Roychowdhury's *Bharatiya Sangitkosh* in Bengali (1979). This is not to discount Wade's tremendous effort which despite these precedents, is certainly admirable, all the more since it has been done by someone who is an outsider to the local culture of North India.

The third section in her chapters is a detailed analysis of individual and *gharana* styles with the help of notations. Wade has painfully transcribed large sections of individual performances

into Indian and western notation. Sometimes this pays off. For instance her discussion of Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit (Gwalior) makes sense, for notations do help to unfold his complicated style even though it carries the risk of oversimplification. On the other hand when Wade discussed Lataf Husain Khan (Agra) her explanation becomes reductive: 'In a total of 35 cycles in this Miyan ki Todi performance, (he) stopped his *mukhda* before *sam* (atit) 19 times; twice he broke just at *sam* and sang the pitch just after *sam* (*anagat*); nine time he hit right on *sam*.' etc.

Clearly such counting takes us nowhere and points to the pitfalls of textualizing Indian classical music. I have used this quote above not to sneer at this kind of analysis but just to warn the reader that it will be of interest only to the die-hard musicologist. Whether such attempts genuinely help us to understand oral traditions like *khyāl* will remain open to debate. One thing is however clear. Even after a century of dedication beginning with both European and Indian Orientalists in the nineteenth century (like Sourindramohan Tagore) Indian classical music has somehow refused to be tamed by the dictates of notation.

I am also a trifle disappointed that although Wade has allowed an Indian edition after fourteen years she hasn't bothered to write a new introduction. Unfortunately typographical and other errors have also been allowed to remain. In one instance picture captions have been interchanged (between Vilayat Husain Khan and Amir Khan). Such small mistakes could easily have been rectified. A new introduction was certainly necessary since otherwise one comes away with the impression that nothing has changed in the field of *khyāl* in the last decade or so. On the contrary the situation had changed dramatically.

For one the most obvious change in the last ten years has been in the area of patronage. The urban middle classes and a burgeoning consumer culture now effectively determines the success and failure of artists. The success of the classical cassettes and CDs by *Music Today* is a pointer to what canny marketing can do even to 'high culture'. Music festivals, as the critic Subbudu has recently pointed out is now effectively in the hands of the tobacco and liquor lobbies. The patronage of the Indian state is no less important. It is impossible not to see that new forms of patronage have affected both the form and content of *khyāl*. Conservatives are bound to be dismayed by such developments but every cloud has its silver lining. It is no small mercy that the

rapidly expanding constituency of classical music in the 1980s was responsible for the resurrection of the career of the late Mansoor in his life. Looking back now it is possible to argue that Mansoor's name has to perforce figure among the acknowledged 'greats' (like Amir Khan or Bade Gulam Ali) who set standards in vocal music in the years following Independence. Such revision is certainly welcome. I was wondering if Wade would have given more space to Mansoor other than the obligatory paragraph if she were to publish her book today. Amir Khan was no doubt an outstanding individual vocalist but his style drew heavily on Kirana. It no longer seems very useful to separate him from that tradition. On the other hand Kishori Amonkar who has only very tenuous links with her parent *gharana* (Jaipur/Atrauli) is championed as a votary of the Alladiya tradition, a honour best reserved for Mansoor. The most puzzling omission of course is Kumar Gandharva who certainly deserves a place as one of the most idiosyncratic artists that Hindustani classical music has ever produced. Another important revolution has been the systematic listing and avail-

ability of 78 r.p.m. recordings from 1900 onwards. I want to stress this because even if these are limited to 3 or 5 minutes, they form the most important informal sound archive of our musical heritage. In this sphere the dedicated work of scholars like Michael Kinnear, Gerry Farrell, Peter Manuel and collectors like the sculptor Sarbari Roychowdhury (Santiniketan) and Amlan Dasgupta (Calcutta)—and there are many others, have indeed been pathbreaking. The richness and variety of this archive is mind boggling. Recordings exist of Rahimat Khan (son of Haddu Khan, Gwalior), Ashiq Ali Khan (son of Fateh Ali of Alliafattu fame, Patiala), Umed Khan (son of Pyar Khan, Gwalior-Patiala); Sureshbabu Mane (son of Abdul Karim), Aman Ali (founder of Bhendi Bazar *gharana*)—the list is unending. Even more surprising is literally the thousands of recordings by female vocalists or *bai's*. HMV has recently released a selection in a series entitled Chairman's Choice which includes the early recordings of Jankibai, Acchanbai, Zohrabai, Malkajan and Gauharjan. To ignore this valuable archive would be to condescend to a powerful but underrated current in India's vocal music and to fall victim to

the self image of the *gharana* as a lineage of only male singers. Once again, what it has meant in terms of form and content has only recently begun to be investigated (notably in the yet to be published work of Amlan Dasgupta and Lakshmi Subramaniam). Indeed it is even possible to argue that a feminist history of classical music in India is now for the first time becoming possible.

Finally, Wade's approach, seen retrospectively seems to be rather 'old fashioned' and far too dependent on the norms of ethnomusicology—which tries to discover the fundamental principles underlying exotic cultures at the cost of social history. It is impossible for instance to study Indian culture today without at least a nodding acquaintance with concepts like 'Orientalism', 'Imagined Community' (or nationalism), 'textualization', 'Invention of Tradition', and the impact of technology (in this case recording and reproduction of sound). Buried in Wade's own text are fascinating bits of information which certainly needs to be brought to the fore. This consists of passing comments on the decreasing speed of *khyal* (without doubt connected to patronage and the rise of a modern sense of subjectivity among

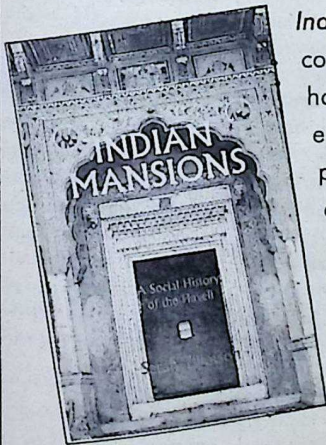
artistes themselves), the disassociation of thumri from dancing, and the figure of V.N. Bhatkhande who as Wade suggestively argues typified the 'moment' where tradition and change came together in the sphere of classical music. But alas, having thrown this nugget she refuses to elaborate any further. Elsewhere she mentions the pain that Abdul Karim Khan felt at the move towards a 'de-Muslimization' of music. As she points out herself this trend was most noticeable in the figure of Omkarnath Thakur in the 1950s whose aggressive nationalism often meant denying the contribution of Muslims. What this attitude did to his singing style is still a matter of debate among aficionados!

It is precisely because Wade has so much to offer that debate with her becomes possible at several levels. There is no doubt that her book is an outstanding contribution to the history and theory of *khyal*. Her scholarship is impeccable and will remain unsurpassed for many years to come. Indian readers will be grateful for the opportunity to possess such a comprehensive volume.

Partho Datta teaches history at Zakir Hussain Evening College, New Delhi.

Indian Mansions A Social History of the Haveli

Sarah Tillotson



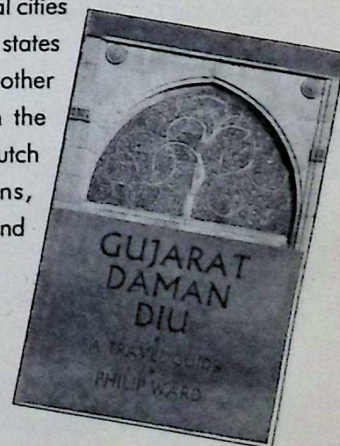
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Indian Mansions follows the course of a day in the life of a haveli, expanding specific events to examine wider patterns of life. The book draws from the diary of the Mughal emperor Babur to the reminiscences of those who worked for the British East India Company. The information is brought up to date by the author's first-hand interviews with those who live in the havelies today.

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Socio-ecological Approach to Development

N.C. Saxena

INDIA'S DRYLANDS: TRIBAL SOCIETIES AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL REGENERATION

By Mihir Shah, Debashis Banerji, P.S. Vijayshankar and Pramathesh Ambasta
Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 322, Rs. 525.00

More than 60 per cent of India's cultivated land is under unirrigated conditions. It has been estimated that even after full irrigation potential of the country has been achieved, it will not be possible to irrigate even 50 per cent of the cultivated area. Thus, almost half of India's arable land is likely to continue being farmed under rainfed conditions. These lands have remained neglected both in terms of investment and technology. Ecological degradation has continued in these areas due to soil and water run-off. Water table has gone down. Forest cover has been depleted and severity of drought has increased.

India's drylands are home to almost two-thirds of its tribal population. The traditional symbiotic relationship of the tribal communities with their environment has been progressively fractured over time. They were dependent on forests and other natural resources but their access to these resources has been progressively curtailed due to unimaginative and anti-tribal forest policies. In addition, the breakdown of traditional institutions for managing common property resources and the failure of new institutions such as panchayats to fill the vacuum has also been responsible for the denudation of natural resources. The traditional community-based ethos has given place to individualized or market-driven exploitation of natural resources without any regard for adverse externalities of such action. Programmes which were taken up in these areas were dependent entirely on the top-down bureaucracy, with very little participation from the village communities.

The present book sets out principles of a new socio-ecological approach to development of India's drylands. The authors show how agricultural growth and employment planning can be based on environmental regeneration of drylands of India. The book claims to 'outline the qualitative contours of such an innovative strategy and quantify its productivity and employment potential'. Thus, the book provides the framework or a new structure for participatory growth through people's institutions in rural India.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter one shows how existing

economic theory with 'its twin presumption of free gifts and free disposals fails to come in terms with the interface between economics and environment'. This chapter upholds adoption of a location-specific approach, based on the unique natural resource endowments of each region. Chapter two advocates that an employment policy focused on increasing the productivity of drylands would not only be non-inflationary but will also lead to sustained increase in production. This argument is then picked up in chapter six, which reviews the performance of employment programmes in the country. The present employment oriented programmes hardly lead to the creation of durable and viable assets and thus should be modified urgently. Moreover, until a few years back, economic programmes undertaken in drought-prone areas were based on over-exploitation of ground water resources, which led to further decline in water table. Sustainability was sacrificed to favour temporary private gains for a few big farmers.

Chapter three questions the present strategy of agricultural growth based on groundwater extraction. The rapid development in groundwater based irrigation in many states has caused groundwater depletion, because of which the life of borewell or other such water supply source becomes short. Highly subsidized irrigation electricity tariffs have led to an indiscriminate and disproportionate level of groundwater extraction. Although significant areas in States, such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh (in all 144 districts in 10 states) have been declared 'dark' and 'grey' zones, there has been no let up in the depletion of groundwater aquifers. The official figures of groundwater availability given by the Groundwater Board are challenged in this chapter, but practical implication of the data has not been discussed.

Chapter four provides a working definition of drylands in India, and chapter five looks at the implication of dryland productivity for tribal population. The next three chapters deal with the economics and technological aspects of watershed development in In-

dia. Finally, issues of participation are touched in the last chapter.

It is argued in these chapters that for increasing productivity of drylands via watershed planning there should be a holistic approach to bring about the development of integrated farming systems on a watershed basis. However, such a programme calls for decentralized planning, competent and committed bureaucratic support and people's participation. The outstanding examples of success at Ralegaon Sidhi and Adgaon in Maharashtra, Kabbarnala in Karnataka and Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh show that drought can be beaten, provided concerted efforts for development on watershed basis are made, with motivated and determined leadership and full participation of local farmers. The authors of this book deal with the subject of watershed planning with the help of a case study of a programme which is already under execution in Neemkheda village in District Dewas (Madhya Pradesh). A detailed costing of the plan along with its employment generating potential is provided along with the stream of activities. The authors then go to project macro-economic implications of this micro-plan for drylands of the country.

On the basis of an initial assessment of the natural resource endowments in the village, three eco-zones were identified within the watershed. Individual household-wise plan was then prepared for all the hundred and ten households of the village, taking into account their requirements of food, water, fertilizers, fodder and domestic energy. The plan then proposed specific water harvesting strategies for each household through dug wells, percolation ponds, underground dykes and other such structures. Water harvesting was then combined with on-farm measures of soil and water harvesting to reduce the run-off from the farm and to raise the soil moisture level. The soil capacity was improved by increasing the supply of organic manure and by making recycling process of biomass resources more efficient through composting and other forms of microbial degradations. Such crop varieties were popularized which were less demanding on soil nutrients. Productive capacity of common lands and forests was improved through grazing regulations combined with fresh tree and shrub plantations.

Despite covering an important and neglected area of public concern, the book fails to impress a policy adviser, nor does it arouse the intellectual curiosity of an academic. The book rightly recognizes the need for people centred policies, but does not describe the internal and external conditions under which people in a village come together for common action. Tribal societies have

had a close relation with forests, but policy changes required in the forestry sector are not discussed in the book at all. There is a wealth of grey literature on watershed development generated by the donor agencies, which throws light on conditions leading to success or failure of projects, but the authors have not used this knowledge in building up their case study on Neemkheda village.

The last chapter of the book suggesting a broad framework within which modalities of cooperation between different agents of change could be worked out through people's participation is rather disappointing. A number of questions remain unanswered. Should one promote community organizations through formal institution of panchayat, or should the group be formed at the hamlet level with fewer participants, as the panchayat is often too large an institution to give a feeling of participation to the members? The political economy of both panchayats and NGOs should have been discussed. For instance, panchayats are political institutions and are not good at fostering unity. They are based on conflict often the product of village factionalism which is not conducive to promote management of common resources. Panchayats are dominated and manipulated by powerful leaders even in tribal societies. Where both structure and procedures for a group is pre-determined, such as in panchayats, flexibility for shaping development needs of the people is sacrificed. Institutional and capacity building often starts with a small, simple and single focus group and then with time it leads to larger, complex and multi-purpose organization. Groups thus begin informally and get formalized later when sufficient experience is gained.

The book has also overlooked the role that small water storage tanks could play in replenishing the underground reservoir for drinking and irrigation purposes. Individual chapters are well written but they do not jell into a cohesive document, which could be of use to researchers or policy makers.

N.C. Saxena, currently Secretary to Government of India in the Department of Rural Development has a PH.D. in forestry from Oxford. His books include, *To the Hands of the Poor*, written jointly with Robert Chambers and Tushaar Shah, *India's Eucalyptus Craze*, *Farm Forestry in South Asia*, *Forests, People and Profit*, and *The Saga of Participatory Forest Management in India*. He has taught and lectured on rural development and community forestry both in India and abroad. He was a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex (U.K.), and at CIFOR, Indonesia.

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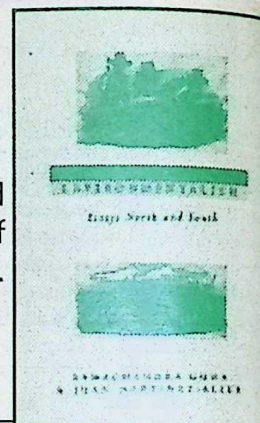
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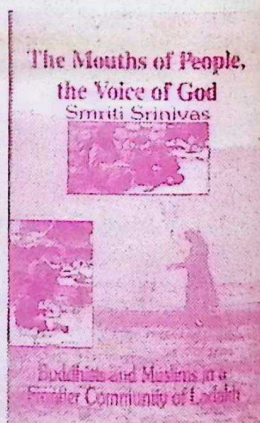
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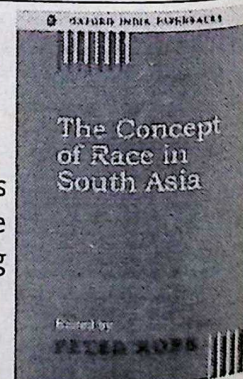


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